The pride of North Carolina's electric cooperatives

Volume 39, No. 1, January 2007

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To Your Health

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Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

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A guide to what ails you

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Healthy Recipes

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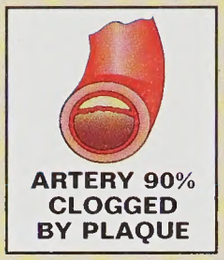

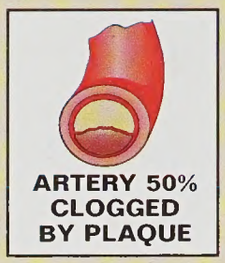

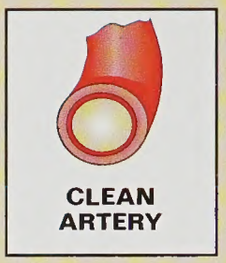

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(By Frank K. Wood)

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- A French study has found that eating this fruit regularly can help prevent hardening of the arteries.
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"HONEY Can Heal WHAT?!"

(By Frank K. Wood)

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- Prevent high blood pressure, colon cancer, senility, and fragile bones. All with one — yes, one — inexpensive daily supplement that keeps you healthy and strong.
- That "spare tire" around your waist is doing more than just slowing you down. It also increases your risk of many life-threatening illnesses. Burn it off without gut-wrenching sit-ups and grueling fitness regimens.
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"Foods that 'EXPLODE' in Your Bowel!"

Plain Answers about IBS, Constipation, Diarrhea, Heartburn, Ulcers, and More!

(By Frank K. Wood)

If you suffer from bloating, cramping, chronic constipation/diarrhea, or symptoms of Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS), you need *The Complete Guide to Digestive Health*. Learn about important new research that identifies which foods are your allies and which foods are your enemies, and find out which tasty beverage you should sip to soothe an irritable bowel, PLUS ...

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- Put a stop to constipation with as little as one tablespoon a day of this mystery food.
- Does your digestive system benefit more from savory breads and cereals or from scrumptious fruits and vegetables? The answer may surprise you!
- Vitamins and minerals may keep you from getting colon cancer, even if this awful killer runs in your family.
- Drop pounds and ditch heartburn with these good fats.
- Irritable bowel syndrome? Check here for another common disorder that could be your real problem.
- Like red meat? You can still lower cancer risks by adding this to your plate.
- Soothing bedtime drink can help you sleep and relieve digestive problems.
- One tiny seed protects against constipation and diarrhea; soothes stomachaches; eases indigestion and heartburn; relieves cramps; reduces gas ... plus, it lowers your risk of colon cancer!
- Heal your body, improve digestion, moisturize skin, help control weight, and it's free.
- Chew this at every meal for a happy, healthy colon.
- How to prevent the embarrassment of a leaky bladder!
- Serve safe spuds ... foil wrapped potato can spell danger.
- These herbs may actually be better at relieving gas than some commercial products. Find out what they are.

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Published by North Carolina Association of Electric Cooperatives, Inc.

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Raleigh, NC 27616

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North Carolina's electric cooperatives provide reliable, safe and affordable electric service to 850,000 homes, farms and businesses in North Carolina. The 27 electric cooperatives are each member-owned, not-for-profit and overseen by a board of directors elected by the membership.

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Periodicals postage paid at Raleigh, N.C., and additional mailing offices. Editorial offices: 3400 Sumner Blvd., Raleigh, N.C. 27616. Carolina Country® is a registered trademark of the North Carolina Association of Electric Cooperatives, Inc. (ISSN 0008-6746) (USPS 832800)
POSTMASTER: Send form 3579 to P.O. Box 27306, Raleigh, N.C. 27611.
Subscriptions: Individual subscriptions, $10 per year. $20 outside U.S.A. Schools, libraries, $6. Members, less than $4.
Address Change: To change address, send magazine mailing label to your electric cooperative.

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HAS YOUR ADDRESS CHANGED?

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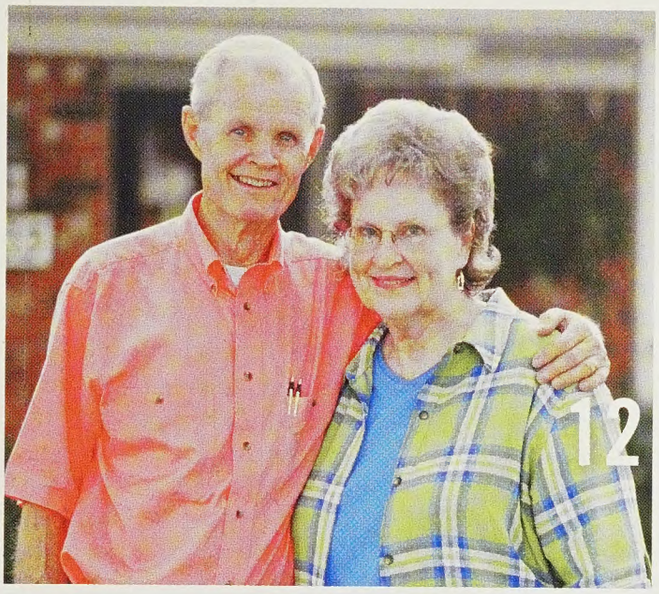

Elder Health

Information about ailments that can affect us as we age: hearing loss, arthritis, glaucoma, shingles. Plus other health tips.

18 Diets and Me

Your stories of what worked for you and what didn't.

26 Healthy Recipes

A selection of nutritional dishes to start off the new year.

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Loving life on Bald Head Island, Brunswick County, where reliable electric power comes from the city of Southport, whose system is operated and maintained by the Touchstone Energy cooperative Brunswick EMC. (Photography by Ron Chapple)

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The new Congress & electric cooperatives

Comments by Glenn English

The following is excerpted from an interview with Glenn English conducted soon after the November mid-term election. English has been CEO of the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association since 1994. Prior to that he served 18 years as a Democratic Congressman from Oklahoma.

The effect of new leadership

With the change in political party leadership in Congress, electric cooperatives are going to have to deal with Congress differently than we did with the Republican majority. But the challenges we had with one party may shift to a different set of challenges with the other party.

What I really took heart in after the election was that it appears that the American people are interested in moderation. They want their government to work. They want the two parties to work together. That would be very good news for the country and very good news for electric cooperatives.

I expect that Representative Nancy Pelosi from San Francisco will be the new Speaker. The last time Democrats controlled Congress, they had very powerful committee chairmen. When the Republicans controlled Congress, the leadership instead retained much of that power and control. The question now is how will Speaker Pelosi and the leadership in the Democratic Caucus approach the issue of committee chairs. Will it be the traditional approach, a very powerful committee chair, or will the leadership retain that? That will have a great deal to do with how our issues will be handled.

New moderates and conservatives

Moderate and conservative Democrats significantly influenced the election. And many of the Republicans who were re-elected were moderate Republicans. The message the voters may be sending is that they have had enough extremism out of both parties and they want a government that works, a government that addresses problems. They recognize that moderate people are most likely to deliver that. And we will find out whether the people will ratify that theory in 2008 with the election of a president.

New lawmakers

We have many new House members coming in. A few will be Republicans, most will be Democrats. So we'll have to get acquainted with all these people and work with them. Some are people we have known over time. Some we supported going into the election.

And unfortunately, we lost some friends who have been supporters of ours. That is the way the political system works in this country, and we have to adapt and evolve and move with it. And I think we are well positioned to do that.

New Democratic governors and state legislatures

We have seen recently on some issues that state legislatures are moving ahead of what is happening nationally. That has an impact on what takes place in Congress. I think we will see more of that. We will see Washington responding quicker to some of these initiatives that prove to be popular in some of the states. And it may be that Washington may not be very far behind the states and in fact may get ahead of the states on some issues.

The reason that we didn't see a swing of 50 to 60 seats as opposed to 30 to 35 is that state legislatures deal with redistricting. They draw the district lines. Republicans controlled state legislatures in 2000, and that made it much more difficult for the Democrats to gain more seats. If the Democrats are able to retain control of state legislatures and governors' seats through 2010, then the Democrats will have that opportunity.

Issues for cooperatives

I suspect climate change will be a major issue for us. We will have to deal with that in a way to minimize rate increases for our members, given the fact that we have some very expensive generating facilities we have to build over the next decade.

Questions of renewable energy sources and energy efficiency are going to figure into the debate over energy in general. A new farm bill, which will have an energy section, is something that we will certainly see. There will be many more issues. We never do hit a period in which we have no issues.

The new political environment and cooperatives

The new political environment should be receptive to cooperatives. We have always positioned ourselves as very responsible and solid. And we find it easier to work in an environment that favors moderates. We don't have a lot of extremists within the makeup of electric co-op programs. So moderation is something that I think we do very well with.

The new Democratic majority in the Congress, if they are smart, will follow a moderate course. They will recognize that the moderates were successful. And they will build this Congress in a more moderate line.

Five generations with Lumbee River EMC

One day I asked my grandfather if he remembered the first time Lumbee River Electric brought him power. He said it was around 1940. He said before there was electricity in this area he worked for the company that cut right of ways for the power lines.

All five generations: my Grandma Lorena at 91, my mama Lora Ann, Lorraine (me in the middle), my daughter Anita and grandson Chandon.

He lived in a one-room shack built onto the back of his landlord's barn. He said he tended the farm on "thirds." He got a third of the profits and the landlord got two-thirds. He said that place grew very rich crops. Now my grandparents own 18 acres of the land they farmed back then. There are five generations of us living on this land, served by Lumbee River EMC. My grandma still walks to the road to get her paper every day. My grandfather drives to the doctor once a month.

Thanks for giving all of us great service for five generations.

Lorraine Oxendine / Lumberton

Who's there?

While on a kayak trip down the Uwharrie River in central North Carolina we had the feeling we were being watched. We spotted Stumpy here with his natural woodpecker holes and added a couple of accessories. You know you're in Carolina country when the wood carvers have wings.

Andrew Montgomery
Asheboro / Randolph EMC

"You go, girl!"

I just wanted to say how much I enjoyed the article on Frances Miller ["Two wheels and thousands of miles," December 2006], and say "you go, girl!"

I am 53, but in one sense can relate to her motorcycle riding and her enjoyment from it. I don't do motorcycles, but do ride horses with several of my female and male horse buddies. We all do what is commonly known as "trail riding," whether it be local organized rides which may be anywhere from 15 to 20-plus miles or trips to the mountains or elsewhere. My buddies range in age from late 40s to early 70s, and we all have a blast camping together.

Frances Miller

So here's to Mrs. Miller and high hopes that she can make her goal of 500,000 miles. I only hope that I can continue to ride horses well into my 70s. As long as she has such a zest for life, she will never be old! I hope she inspires all the younger people out there who just sit back and let life pass them by.

Kim D. Jones / Edgecombe-Martin EMC

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World's Most Valuable Timepiece Disappears

Back in 1933, the single most important watch ever built was engineered for a quiet millionaire collector named Henry Graves. It took over three years and the most advanced horological technique to create the multifunction masterpiece. This one-of-a-kind watch was to become the most coveted piece in the collection of the Museum of Time near Chicago. Recently this ultra-rare innovation was auctioned off for the record price of $11,030,000 by Sotheby's to a secretive anonymous collector. Now the watch is locked away in a private vault in an unknown location. We believe that a classic like this should be available to true watch aficionados, so Stauer replicated the exact Graves design in the limited edition Graves '33.

The antique enameled face and Bruguet hands are true to the original. But the real beauty of this watch is on the inside. We replicated an extremely complicated automatic movement with 27 jewels and seven hands. There are over 210 individual parts that are assembled entirely by hand and then tested for over 15 days on Swiss calibrators to ensure accuracy. The watches are then reinspected in the United States upon their arrival.

27 jewels and 210 hand-assembled parts drive this classic masterpiece.

What makes rare watches rare?

Business Week states it best…"It's the complications that can have the biggest impact on price." (*Business Week, July, 2003*). The four interior complications on our Graves™ watch display the month, day, date and the 24 hour clock graphically depicts the sun and the moon. The innovative engine for this timepiece is powered by the movement of the body as the automatic rotor winds the mainspring. It never needs batteries and never needs to be manually wound. The precision crafted gears are "lubricated" by 27 rubies that give the hands a smooth sweeping movement. And the watch is tough enough to stay water resistant to 5 atmospheres. The movement is covered by a 2-year warranty.

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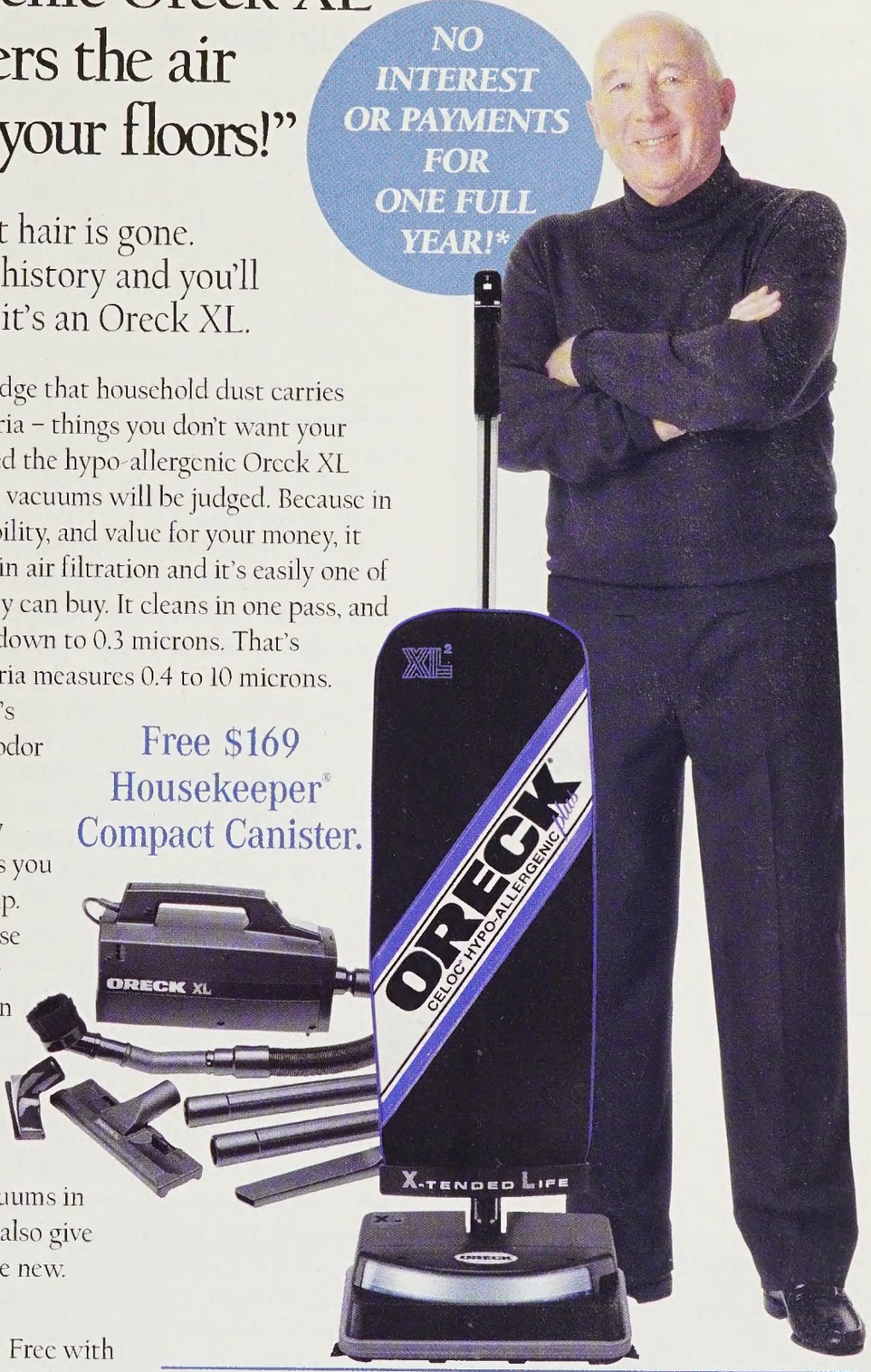

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Teaching teens to enjoy writing and life

Peter Damroth

Speaking to award-winning North Carolina teachers in November, Erin Gruwell told how she changed students' lives and they changed hers.

Erin Gruwell gives new meaning to the phrase "We Shall Overcome."

Gruwell, the keynote speaker at recent Bright Ideas awards banquets in Greenville and Raleigh, spoke passionately about teaching some "unteachable" teenagers who became citizens for change. Both ceremonies, sponsored by Touchstone Energy cooperatives, were held to honor North Carolina teachers and award them grant money for classroom projects.

Gruwell moved animatedly across the stage as she recalled her first day at an urban high school in California. That day, dressed in pearls and polka dots, the perky English teacher faced sullen students hardened by gang violence and drugs.

She learned they had been written off by their principal, teachers, parents and by themselves. Her students had histories with crack cocaine, juvenile detention, foster care. By contrast, she had a brand-new degree, a white convertible and liked sonnets.

Darius particularly stood out. Not just because he was 6-foot-5, but because the gang member sailed a paper airplane straight at her, asking, "Why do we have to read books about dead guys in tights?"

But Gruwell's real "aha" moment came when she asked about her students' lives. Each had lost someone to violence. All had been shot at. Darius had buried two dozen friends by age 14. Maria's dad gave her boxing gloves as he was hauled off to jail. Her students lived with stereotypes and fear.

Darius summed it up when he said "I feel like I come from an undeclared war zone."

"I realized they didn't expect to make it," Gruwell said. "I started thinking about other kids in wars."

They hadn't heard of the Holocaust, so Gruwell asked the English department chair for books "to reach my kids." Told her kids were "too stupid," Gruwell used her own money to purchase 150 copies of "Night" by Elie Wiesel and "Anne Frank: The Diary of a Young Girl."

She brought in champagne glasses and her class raised them in a toast. Maria's toast spoke volumes: "I don't want to be behind bars when I'm 18. I want to change."

Their apathy melted as they read about the brave struggles of others. One day Maria stormed in, threw her book and cried, "Why didn't you tell me Anne dies!" Not only had Maria finished the book, Maria cared.

They began their own eloquent diaries, calling themselves "The Freedom Writers" after 1960s civil rights activists. Darius, captivated by brave Miep Gies' holocaust story, led a class effort to raise money to fly the survivor, still living in Europe, to California. "Every day, Darius would count the coins in the jar," Gruwell recalled.

And later, Darius was wearing his Sunday best when he met tiny Miep in person and called her his hero.

The teenagers and Gruwell were also inspired by Ziata Filipovic, who lived through war-torn Sarajevo. Eventually, they captured their eye-opening journey in a book, "The Freedom Writers Diary—How a Teacher and 150 Teens Used Writing to Change Themselves and the World Around Them."

They've appeared on television shows such as "Prime Time Live" and "Good Morning America." A movie, titled "Freedom Writers," is scheduled to be in theaters this month. Timed for the Martin Luther King holiday, it stars award-winning actress Hilary Swank as Gruwell.

Gruwell's "unteachable" students went on to attend college. Or as Gruwell puts it, "It's never too late to change."

Erin Gruwell now serves as president of The Freedom Writers Foundation, a non-profit organization that provides scholarships for children in need. Learn more about the movie and the book at www.freedomwritersfoundation.org. Phone: (562) 433-5388. Address: P.O. Box 41505, Long Beach, CA 90853.

— Karen Olson House

Bright Ideas 2006

During November 2006, Touchstone Energy cooperatives awarded more than $550,000 in Bright Ideas grants to North Carolina teachers. The Bright Ideas program strives to improve education by awarding grants for innovative, class-based projects in grades K–12. Since 1994, North Carolina's electric cooperatives have awarded teachers more than 5,000 grants totaling more than $5 million, funding projects in mathematics, arts and the sciences. Ceremonies honoring the winning teachers are held annually. For more information, visit www.ncbrightideas.com

Mast General Store will buy renewable energy

Blue Ridge Electric Membership Corporation and NC GreenPower have recognized Mast General Store for its support of the state's landmark renewable energy initiative.

Serviced with electricity locally by Blue Ridge Electric, Mast General Store will purchase 3.6 million kilowatt-hours per year from renewable energy sources through NC GreenPower. The purchase will help to offset the electrical usage across their family of stores, reducing carbon dioxide emissions and benefiting the environment.

Mast General Store's participation in the NC GreenPower program is consistent with their commitment to preserving the natural and cultural heritage of western North Carolina. Established in 1883 in Valle Crucis as a general mercantile, Mast General Store carried goods ranging from plows to cloth, and even caskets, claiming that, "If you can't buy it here, you don't need it." That tradition continues today, not only in the Valle Crucis original store, but also in other Mast General Stores in Boone, Waynesville, Hendersonville, Asheville, and in Greenville, S.C., and Knoxville, Tenn.

The store's annual purchase of renewable energy will offset approximately 750,000 pounds of carbon dioxide, which would have been emitted from a coal plant producing the same amount of power. Environmentally, the annual reduction of this potent greenhouse gas is equivalent to planting 57,000 trees or more than 900,000 miles not driven by automobiles in the state.

Blue Ridge Electric and other participating utilities across the state partner with NC GreenPower to make it convenient for consumers—both residential and business/commercial—to support renewable energy through their contributions to NC GreenPower. Blue Ridge Electric members can call or sign up on line to elect to make contributions to NC GreenPower by having it added to their monthly power bill.

As the nation's first statewide not-for-profit initiative to encourage development of more renewable energy resources, NC GreenPower utilizes contributions to encourage renewable energy development and to increase the amount of green power on the state's energy grid.

For more information about NC GreenPower, visit www.ncgreenpower.org. Blue Ridge Electric members may sign up for NC GreenPower by visiting www.BlueRidgeEMC.com or by calling their local Blue Ridge Electric office. In Watauga County, the number is (828) 264-8894.

Mast General Store will buy 3.6 million kilowatt-hours of electricity per year generated by renewable energy sources. Shown are store vice presidents Fred and Lisa Martin flanked by Martha Gettys of NC GreenPower and Brian Crutchfield, economic development director for Blue Ridge Electric.

USDA offers grants and loans for renewable energy and energy efficiency

Farmers and rural small businesses interested in funding a renewable energy project or making energy efficiency improvements are encouraged to check out the Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Improvements Program from USDA Rural Development.

- This program provides grant and guaranteed loan funds to agricultural producers and rural small businesses.
- Energy efficiency improvements are improvements to a building, facility or process that reduce energy consumption. Examples of energy efficiency improvements are the installation of more energy-efficient equipment such as heating and cooling systems, ventilation systems, lighting systems, fans, pumps, motors and refrigeration units.
- Guaranteed loans can cover up to 50 percent of total eligible costs. The minimum guaranteed loan is $5,000 and the maximum is $10 million.
- Eligible renewable energy projects include solar, biomass, wind, anaerobic digesters, geothermal and hydrogen.
- Grants can cover up to 25 percent of eligible project costs. The minimum energy efficiency grant is $1,500 and the maximum is $250,000. The minimum renewable energy grant is $2,500 and the maximum is $500,000.
- Applications can be filed anytime and there is a simplified application process for applications with total eligible project costs of $200,000 or less. Rural Development is urging applicants to start the application process now to allow sufficient time for gathering the necessary information.

For further information contact your local Rural Development office or H. Rossie Bullock at (910) 739-3349, extension 4. Energy program information can also be found at www.rurdev.usda.gov/rbs/farmbill.

Nor'easter lashed the coastal plain at Thanksgiving

Just as North Carolinians prepared for Thanksgiving and were beginning to celebrate the end of the 2006 hurricane season, another storm hit the eastern part of the state.

The Nov. 22–23 Nor'easter dumped 2 to 5 inches of rain on the state, and brought 20–30 mph winds. Heavy rainfall caused flooding throughout eastern North Carolina and in parts of the Triangle. High water forced the closing of many roads and delayed frustrated holiday travelers.

North Carolina's electric cooperatives reported approximately 21,000 outages early Wednesday morning, most of which were at Tideland EMC and Cape Hatteras Electric Cooperative. By mid-day the cooperatives were experiencing 13,000 outages statewide. Scattered outages were also reported east of Interstate 85. Most members had power restored to them later that evening.

According to the National Weather Service, a nor'easter is, "a strong low pressure system that affects the Mid Atlantic and New England states. These winter weather events are notorious for producing heavy snow, rain, and tremendous waves that crash onto Atlantic beaches, often causing erosion and structural damage."

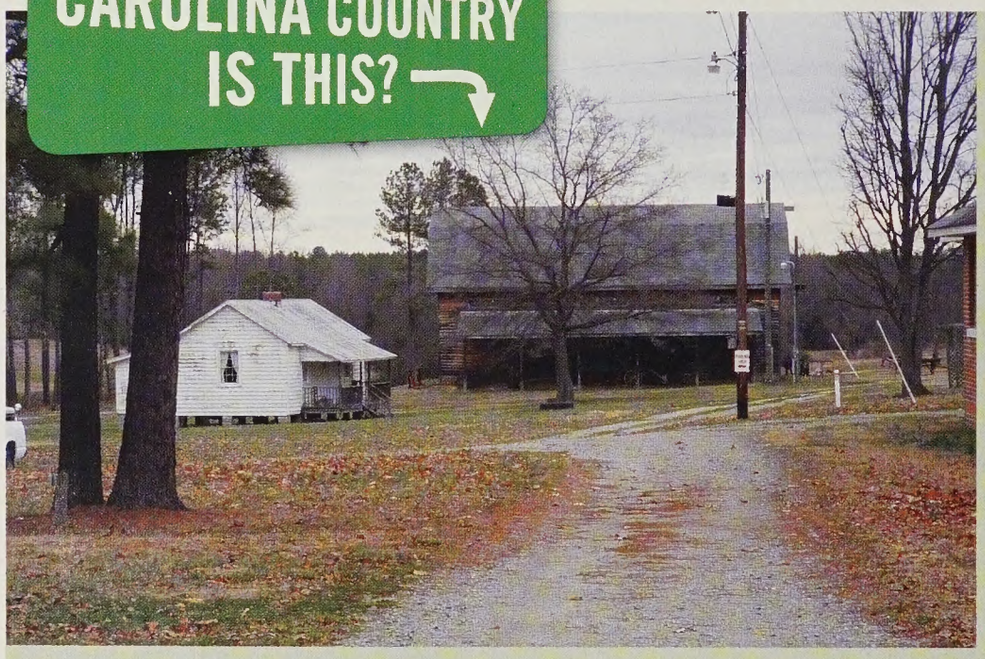
Nor'easters, some of winter's most ferocious storms, can occur any time between October and April. Nor'easters are usually the product of cold temperatures and high winds. These low-pressure systems typically form in the Gulf of Mexico or off the East Coast in the Atlantic Ocean and get their name from the strong northeasterly winds that blow them upward and over coastal areas.

A couple of notable nor'easters have lived in infamy throughout the years. The Halloween nor'easter of 1991 damaged or destroyed over 1,000 homes along the East Coast. The President's Day nor'easter of 1979 dumped over 26 inches of snow on Washington, D.C. The Ash Wednesday storm in March 1962 lasted through five high tides and is considered one of the worst ever to hit the Mid Atlantic states.

In the aftermath of the storm, North Carolinians can be thankful that this nor'easter shifted away from the state by mid-day on Thursday and brought sunny skies to the area just in time for holiday festivities.

—Morgan Lashley

WHERE IN CAROLINA COUNTRY IS THIS?



This is a Carolina Country scene in Touchstone Energy territory. If you know where it is, send your answer by Jan. 8 with your name, address, phone number and the name of your electric cooperative.

By e-mail: where@carolinacountry.com

Or by mail: Where in Carolina Country?
P.O. Box 27306
Raleigh, NC 27611

The winner, chosen at random and announced in our February issue, will receive $25.

December winner:

The December photo showed the Sowers homeplace on Boone's Cave Rd. in the Churchland community of Davidson County. Philip Sowers built the unusually shaped house in about 1865. Lisa Campbell told us the three wings each face a different county: Davidson, Rowan and Davie. The dentist Wade Sowers lived and practiced here and Philip's grandson Stephen lived here. Harley R. Smith II mentioned that the bricks were made on the site. The many correct answers were numbered and the $25 winner chosen at random was Pansy Rummage of Lexington, a member of EnergyUnited.

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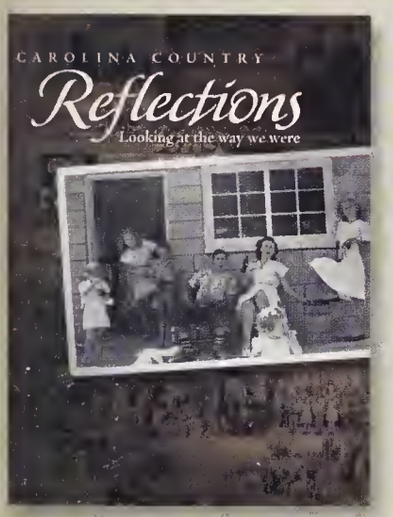

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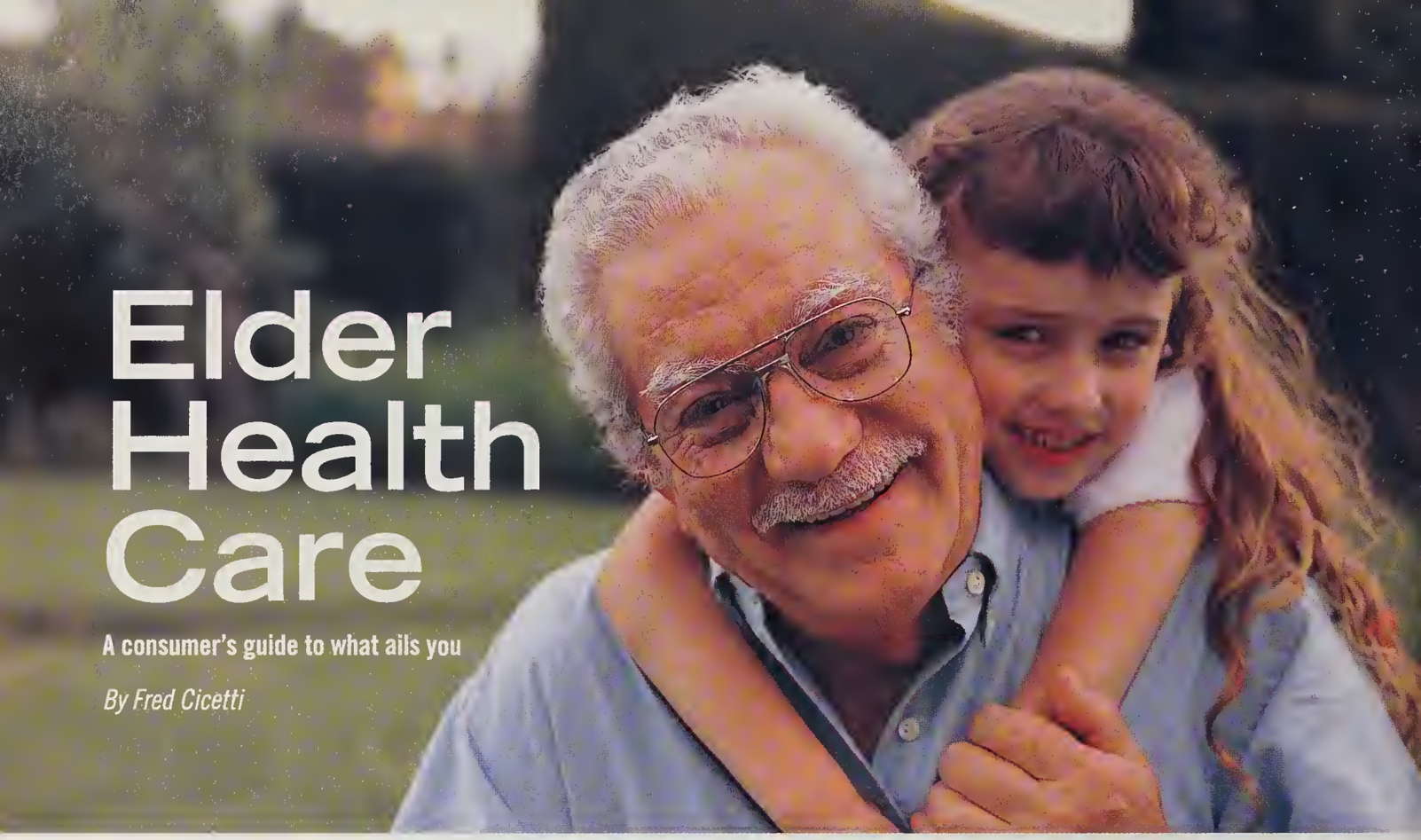

Elder Health Care

A consumer's guide to what ails you

By Fred Cicetti

As we advance in age, our ailments seem to advance along with us. Besides maintaining healthy habits with proper nutrition and exercise, it's important to recognize when and where we're hurting. Carolina Country has assembled a series of health-related articles that may be of special interest to seniors and those who care for aging family members and friends.

Hearing Loss

About one in three Americans over 60 suffer from loss of hearing, which can range from the inability to hear certain voices to deafness.

There are two basic categories of hearing loss. One is caused by damage to the inner ear or the auditory nerve. This type of hearing loss is permanent. The second kind occurs when sound can't reach the inner ear. This can be repaired medically or surgically.

Presbycusis, one form of hearing loss, occurs with age. Presbycusis can be caused by changes in the inner ear, auditory nerve, middle ear or outer ear. Some of its causes are aging, loud noise, heredity, head injury, infection, illness, certain prescription drugs, and circulation problems such as high blood pressure. It seems to be inherited.

Tinnitus, also common in older people, is the ringing, hissing or roaring sound in the ears frequently caused by exposure to loud noise or certain medicines. Tinnitus is a symptom that can come with any type of hearing loss.

Hearing loss can by caused by "ototoxic" medicines that damage the inner ear. Some antibiotics are ototoxic. Aspirin can cause temporary problems. If you're having a hearing problem, ask your doctor about any medications you're taking.

Loud noise contributes to presbycusis and tinnitus. Noise has damaged the hearing of about 10 million Americans, many of them Baby Boomers who listened to hard rock with the volume turned up as far as possible.

Hearing problems that are ignored or untreated can get worse. If you have a hearing problem, see your doctor. Hearing aids, special training, medicines and surgery are options.

Your doctor may refer you to an otolaryngologist, a physician who specializes in problems of the ear. Or you may be referred to an audiologist, a professional who can identify and measure hearing loss. An audiologist can help you determine if you need a hearing aid.

There are other "hearing aids" you should consider. There are listening systems to help you enjoy television or radio without being bothered by other sounds around you. Some hearing aids can be plugged directly into TVs, stereos, microphones and personal FM systems to help you hear better.

Some telephones work with certain hearing aids to make sounds louder and remove background noise. And some auditoriums, movie theaters and other public places are equipped with special sound systems that send sounds directly to your ears.

Alerts such as doorbells, smoke detectors and alarm clocks can give you a signal that you can see or a vibration that you can feel. For example, a flashing light can let you know someone is at the door or on the phone.

Arthritis

If you think you may have arthritis you should see a doctor. Self-diagnosis is hazardous to your health.

Arthritis, which comes in different forms, is inflammation of the joints. Osteoarthritis, rheumatoid arthritis and gout are the three most common forms of arthritis among seniors. Osteoarthritis is the most prevalent. None is contagious.

Osteoarthritis

You get osteoarthritis when cartilage—the cushioning tissue within the joints—wears down. This produces stiffness and pain. The disease affects both men and women. By age 65, more than 50 percent of us have osteoarthritis in at least one joint.

You can get osteoarthritis in any joint, but it usually strikes those that support weight. Common signs of osteoarthritis include joint pain, swelling and tenderness. However, only a third of people whose x-rays show osteoarthritis report any symptoms.

Treatments for osteoarthritis include exercise, joint care, dieting, medicines and surgery. For pain relief, doctors usually start with acetaminophen, the medicine in Tylenol, because the side effects are minimal. If acetaminophen does not relieve pain, then non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs such as ibuprofen and naproxen may be used.

The dietary supplements glucosamine and chondroitin sulfate are used by many who say the supplements can relieve the symptoms of osteoarthritis.

Rheumatoid Arthritis

Rheumatoid arthritis, which is characterized by inflammation of the joint lining, is very different from osteoarthritis. It occurs when the immune system turns against the body. It not only affects the joints, but may also attack other parts of the body such as the lungs and eyes. People with rheumatoid arthritis may feel sick.

There's a symmetry to rheumatoid arthritis. For example, if the right knee is affected, it's likely the left knee will suffer, too. Women are much more likely than men to get rheumatoid arthritis.

Treatments for rheumatoid arthritis include exercise, medication and surgery. Reducing stress is important.

Some drugs for rheumatoid arthritis relieve pain. Some reduce inflammation. And then there are the DMARDs (disease-modifying anti-rheumatic drugs), which can often slow the disease. New types of drugs called biological response modifiers also can help reduce joint damage.

Gout

Gout usually attacks at night. Stress, alcohol, drugs or an illness can trigger gout. It's caused by a build-up of crystals of uric acid in a joint. Uric acid is in all human tissue and is found in foods.

Often, gout affects joints in the lower part of the body such as the ankles, heels, knees, and especially the big toes. The disease is more common in men. Early attacks usually subside within three to 10 days, even without treatment, and the next attack may not occur for months or even years.

Most people with gout are able to control their symptoms with treatment. The most common treatments are high doses of oral non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs, or corticosteroids, which are taken by mouth or injected into the affected joint. Patients often begin to improve within a few hours of treatment.

continued on page 14

How changing seasons could affect your mood

Every 365 days, the earth completes a revolution around the sun, fading summer into fall and winter to spring. For some people, the changing seasons bring drastic changes in mood.

According to the American Academy of Family Physicians, 10 to 20 percent of adults in the U.S. may experience mild Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD), a cyclic and seasonal condition with symptoms like depression, low energy, sleepiness, overeating, changes in appetite, weight loss or gain, insomnia and anxiety. For those who experience SAD, symptoms recur every year at about the same time and are unrelated to other major life events.

Most people with SAD experience depression in the winter and enjoy a more positive outlook in spring and summer.

Weak winter sun can lead to depressive episodes

The National Mental Health Association reports that an excess amount of melatonin, a sleep hormone released in the brain, might be to blame for symptoms of winter depression. The brain releases melatonin when it is dark; short winter days with less sunlight cause the brain to produce more melatonin than it should. Too much melatonin can cause sleepiness and depression.

Lack of sunlight can also confuse your body's circadian rhythm, or 24-hour cycle, making it difficult to maintain normal sleeping and waking hours.

How do you know if you have SAD?

According to the American Academy of Family Physicians, you may have depression related to a seasonal affective disorder if:

- You experience symptoms of depression or mood change at about the same time each year for at least two years in a row
- Periods of depression are followed by periods of non-depression
- Nothing else can explain the change in your mood or behavior

Beat the seasonal blues

All experts agree that if you experience serious symptoms of depression or have thoughts of suicide, you should see a doctor to get help. For milder cases of seasonal depression, you can learn how to cope and find joy in every season. Experts at the Mayo Clinic recommend that you try the following:

- Exercise regularly
- Increase your exposure to sunlight in winter
- Make it a habit to do something you enjoy
- Consult your doctor if feelings of hopelessness or depression persist

Glaucoma

Glaucoma is a leading cause of blindness in the United States and, unfortunately, there is no cure.

Any vision that glaucoma destroys cannot be restored. Early diagnosis of glaucoma is extremely important, because there are treatments that may save remaining vision.

Almost three million people in the U.S. have glaucoma. Those at highest risk are African-Americans, everyone over age 60, and people with a family history of glaucoma.

Glaucoma is defined as a group of diseases that can damage the eye's optic nerve, which carries images from the eye to the brain. Here's how glaucoma works:

A clear fluid flows through a small space at the front of the eye called the "anterior chamber." If you have glaucoma, the fluid drains too slowly out of the eye and pressure builds up. This pressure may damage the optic nerve.

However, increased eye pressure doesn't necessarily mean you have glaucoma. It means you are at risk for glaucoma. A person has glaucoma only if the optic nerve is damaged.

Glaucoma can develop in one or both eyes. The most common type of glaucoma starts out with no symptoms. Without treatment, people with glaucoma will slowly lose their peripheral vision. Eventually, the middle of your vision field may decrease until you are blind.

Glaucoma is just one reason seniors should make regular visits to an eye doctor. Glaucoma is detected through a comprehensive eye exam that includes a visual acuity test, visual field test, dilated eye exam, tonometry, and pachymetry.

A visual acuity test measures vision at various distances. A visual field test measures peripheral vision. In a dilated eye exam, a special magnifying lens is used to examine the inside of the eye. In tonometry, an instrument measures the pressure inside the eye. With pachymetry, an instrument is used to measure the thickness of your cornea, the transparent part of the front of the eye.

The most common treatments for glaucoma are medication and surgery. Medications for glaucoma may come in eye drops or pills. For most people with glaucoma, regular use of medications will control the increased fluid pressure.

Laser surgery is another treatment for glaucoma. The laser is focused on the part of the anterior chamber where the fluid leaves the eye. This makes it easier for fluid to exit the eye. Over time, the effect of this surgery may wear off. Patients who have laser surgery may need to keep taking glaucoma drugs.

Studies have shown that the early detection and treatment of glaucoma is the best way to control the disease. So, have your eyes examined thoroughly and regularly if you are in a high-risk category. And that includes all of us seniors.

Women and eye disease

Although most people will experience some sort of change in their vision over time, women are more prone to eye disease than men, according to Prevent Blindness America (PBA).

The four leading causes of blindness—cataracts, glaucoma, diabetic retinopathy and age-related macular degeneration (AMD)—are all more prevalent in women than men. In fact, women make up two-thirds of the more than 3.4 million Americans age 40 and older who are visually impaired. Unfortunately, because there is no cure for these diseases, early detection and treatment are the only way to preserve vision.

"For women, the message is clear," said Daniel D. Garrett, senior vice president of Prevent Blindness America. "See your eye doctor for a complete eye exam, particularly if you haven't been for several years, and even if you haven't noticed any symptoms."

Regular eye exams are a must for women of all ages. Even women who are pregnant can still have their eyes safely dilated. Another eye disease that affects mostly women is chronic dry eye. In fact, one in 12 women over the age of 50 has the condition, which may be caused by a decrease in estrogen levels due to menopause. Chronic dry eye symptoms include blurred vision, light sensitivity and sensation of itchiness or irritation in the eyes. Without treatment, some may ultimately suffer vision loss.

"There are so many changes that the body goes through over our lifetime that it is imperative that we monitor each of them closely, especially our eyes," said Garrett. "A young woman going through her first pregnancy, a middle-aged woman noticing she's having trouble with her peripheral vision, or an elderly woman who is having a hard time reading the newspaper can benefit tremendously by getting a complete, professional eye exam."

Besides early detection, Prevent Blindness America offers other ways for women to keep their eyes healthy:

- Eat healthy and stay fit. The American Journal of Clinical Nutrition found that the risk of cataracts can be lowered by eating 3½ servings of fruits or vegetables a day. Green leafy vegetables especially contain loads of nutrients for the eye.
- Take supplements. Antioxidants have been shown to reduce the progression of some eye illnesses, including AMD. Vitamin A, riboflavin (vitamin B2), vitamin C and zinc are good sources to help maintain eye health.
- Quit smoking. Besides the typically known side effects of smoking including cancer and lung disease, smoking increases the risk for eye diseases.
- Wear UV eye protection. When venturing outdoors, PBA recommends wearing brimmed hats in conjunction with UV-rated sunglasses. UV rays are extremely dangerous to the eyes.
- Know Your Family History. Genetics plays a key role in eye disease. Research your family's health history and notify your eye care professional of any eye diseases that run in the family.

For more information on women's eye health, call (800) 331-2020 or visit www.preventblindness.org.

Shingles

Shingles is a painful skin disease caused by the chickenpox virus awakening from a dormant state to attack your body again. Some people report fever and weakness when the disease starts. Within two to three days, a red, blotchy rash develops. The rash erupts into small blisters that look like chickenpox. And it's very painful.

Anyone who has had chickenpox can get shingles. Half of all Americans will get shingles by the time they are 80. Shingles occurs in people of all ages, but it is most common in people between 60 and 80. Each year, about 600,000 Americans are diagnosed with shingles.

The virus that causes chickenpox and shingles remains in your body for life. It stays inactive until a period when your immunity is down. And, when you're older, your defenses are not what they used to be.

The inactive virus rests in nerve cells near the spine. When it reactivates, it follows a single nerve path to the skin. The shingles rash helps with its diagnosis; the rash erupts in a belt-like pattern on only one side of the body, or it appears on one side of the face. It usually begins as a patch of red dots which become blisters.

Physicians treat shingles with antiviral and pain medications. The antivirals don't cure shingles, but they weaken the virus, reduce the pain and accelerate healing. The antiviral medications work faster if they are started early—within 72 hours from the appearance of the rash.

The disease's name comes from the Latin word cingulum, which means belt. The virus that causes shingles is varicella-zoster, which combines the Latin word for little pox with the Greek word for girdle. In Italy, shingles is often called St. Anthony's fire.

If you have had chickenpox, shingles is not contagious. If you have never had chickenpox, you can catch the virus from contacting the fluid in shingles blisters. However, you will not get shingles, but you could get chickenpox.

The pain of shingles can be severe. If it is strong and lasts for months or years, it is called postherpetic neuralgia. Persistent pain is a common symptom in people over 60. However, most victims of shingles overcome their symptoms in about a month. And the odds are against them getting shingles again.

Outbreaks that start on the face or eyes can cause vision or hearing problems. Even permanent blindness can result if the cornea of the eye is affected. In patients with immune deficiency, the rash can be much more extensive than usual and the illness can be complicated by pneumonia. These cases, while more serious, are rarely fatal.

Researchers at the National Institutes of Health are now working on a shingles vaccine to prevent the disease in people who have already had chickenpox. It is designed to boost the immune system and protect older adults from shingles later on.

The vaccine is basically a stronger version of the chickenpox shot, which became available in 1995. The chickenpox shot prevents chickenpox in 70 to 90 percent of those vaccinated, and 95 percent of the rest have only mild symptoms. Millions of children and adults have already received the chickenpox shot.

An apple a day

Cornell University researchers have found that apples may be one of the most powerful cancer-fighting foods because they contain a combination of chemicals called phenolics and flavonoids.

Researchers fed rats a substance known to cause breast cancer and apple extracts. When rats were fed the equivalent of one apple per day, their cancer rates were reduced by 17 percent. When the rodents were fed the equivalent of three apples per day, their cancer rates were reduced by 39 percent. And when they were fed the equivalent of six apples per day, their cancer rates fell by 44 percent. The number of tumors was cut by up to 61 percent in the study.

—adapted from Health magazine

Any Questions?

All articles © 2006 by Fred Cicetti, a veteran health care writer. If you would like to ask a question, write to him at fredcicetti@gmail.com

Advertisement

Vinegar Can Be Used For WHAT?

CHICAGO (Special) - Research from centers around the world report what ancient healers knew thousands of years ago -- *that vinegar is the wonder elixir for a healthier life.*

Since ancient times a daily dose of apple cider vinegar has been taken to control appetite and maintain well-being.

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It's the most complete collection since the discovery of vinegar 10,000 years ago.

You'll learn how to control your appetite to lose weight with a meal-time vinegar cocktail.

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When fresh apples are allowed to ferment organically, the result is a vinegar that contains natural sediment with pectin, trace minerals, beneficial bacteria and enzymes.

And pectin helps your body reduce cholesterol levels to lower the risk of cardiovascular disease.

"The Vinegar Book" will amaze and delight you with 308 natural ways to enrich your personal life and home. Time-honored folk remedies that show step by step how to mix vinegar with other kitchen staples to:

- Improve your metabolism
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- Help lower cholesterol
- Uses for middle ear problems
- Condition problem skin
- Fight age and liver spots
- Gain soft, radiant skin
- Amazing hair treatments
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- Fight osteoporosis with calcium
- Help headaches fade away
- Corn and callus relief
- Aid to maintain health
- Skin rashes, athlete's foot
- Relieve insect bites
- Remedy for urinary problems
- Use for coughs, colds
- Destroy bacteria in foods
- Heart and circulatory problems
- Fight high blood pressure

And the above is only a brief sample of the 308 uses for vinegar you'll learn about.

You'll know how grandma's recipe for her famous pie crust depends on a spoonful of apple cider vinegar.

How a combination of vinegar and fruit juices relieves arthritis symptoms and other aches and pains.

Try a delicious low calorie, calcium-and-iron rich chicken soup and vinegar recipe.

Combine your favorite herbs with vinegar to create tenderizers, mild laxatives, mouth washes, tension relievers, and mouthwatering tasty salad dressings and more.

Of course, we all know the cleaning power of vinegar. But Emily Thacker's research has uncovered a host of new moneysaving ways to keep your home, laundry, clothing, brass, copper and other possessions sparkling clean. And with less effort.

You'll also delight in making and bottling your own special vinegars. It's so simple to follow Emily's recipes. Homemade vinegars make such wonderful gifts. You could even end up selling your creations to food and gift shops.

And get ready for many compliments when the family and friends bite into those delicious pickle treats you make.

Yes, 308 remedies and recipes are yours to enjoy on a no-risk trial basis for 90 life-improving days. Imagine, three full months without obligation to keep this exclusive, one-of-its kind book.

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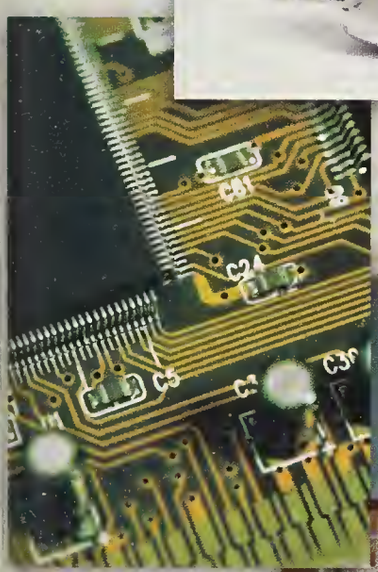

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ALL THOSE DIETS

WHAT WORKS –OR DOESN'T WORK– FOR YOU

Thanks to everyone who sent us stories of your experience with dieting. It seems there are many ways to attain your healthy weight. You just need to find the one that suits you. You can see more stories on this topic at our Web site. Next month we'll publish your pictures and stories from the old days [Deadline was Dec. 15]. To see the other topics in our "Nothing Could Be Finer" series, go to page 20.

Spirituality, will power, exercise

On this day, Nov. 1, 2006, I can tell you what is working for me now regarding losing weight. If I had written this story a year ago, I couldn't tell you.

My spirituality is helping me today to finally eat healthy. You have to have strong will power, and you must exercise also. I've been overweight for many years. There have been weight losses and weight gains, which is not good for anyone. Each person goes through something different when trying to lose weight. I've arrived; I'm finally doing it.

My 7-year-old daughter and I walk every day. She's overweight also, but she tells me, "Mama, I'm ready to lose weight." I'm writing this story hoping that it will encourage someone or some family to begin to eat healthier and exercise. It's never too late to get started.

Larecia Bullock
Oxford | Wake EMC

Eating right

I have battled a weight problem my entire life—the ultimate yo-yo. After the birth of my son, I was heavy and unmotivated to attempt another diet. I stayed heavy for about three years. At that point my mother found out she had diabetes. However, she continued to eat whatever she wanted. Basically, I became angry because I saw that food was so important to her that she put food before my father, her children and her grandchildren—before basically everything. Uncontrolled eating of processed, unhealthy, sugar-laden food was ruining her health.

I decided right then that I was going to start eating the right foods—healthy foods and responsible foods so that I did not continue to make food my idol as well. I've lost 50 pounds and kept it off for several years. My mother is starting to eat right also!

Rebecca Rabon
Locust | Union Power Cooperative

First Place Bible study

This title, "Diets & Me" is the whole reason the diets I have tried in the past have failed. Of course, it was for me that I attempted the diets in the first place. I was focused on myself. I wanted to look better and feel better for myself.

It was because of an obedient heart that I tried First Place. First Place is a Bible study about weight loss. The whole concept was to put Christ in first place in our lives rather than our personal desire for food. It was all becoming clear to me now. It was not about diets and me but about making my body an acceptable dwelling place for the Holy Spirit (I Corinthians 6:19 & 20). It was then that the pounds came off—40 of them to be exact. I am healthier now because Christ is my focus, not myself. To God be the Glory!

Aurelia Lagle
Harmony / EnergyUnited

Exercise for the "A"

From the time I was 8 years old until I was 14, I was chubby. My brother would call me "Porky." In January 1995 I stepped on the scales, and I was very disgusted. I have tried diets in the past, which normally lasted one day because I was starving to death! I was dreading the health/PE class I had to take in high school because I was going to have to make myself run around the track every Wednesday to receive an "A." I was an "A" student, and I was determined that no PE class was going to knock me out of that. I had also set a goal to lose weight and *really* do it this time.

I cut back what I was eating and got plenty of exercise, even if it meant putting my feet under the couch to do sit-ups. At times, I made my brother—the one that called me "Porky"—hold my feet for me. My parents can tell you that I did a lot of jumping rope and jumping jacks that semester. It was nice hearing the comments, "Kristi, you're looking good!" And, "How much weight have you lost?"

By October of that same year, I dropped 52 pounds. I had accomplished what I wanted—to be skinny and to say goodbye "Porky!"

Kristi Edwards
Mt. Airy / Surry-Yadkin EMC

TOPS

For years I tried many diets. I would lose the weight and gain it back. I found an ad for TOPS which stands for "Take Off Pounds Sensibly." I received a lot of support from this non-profit weight-loss group.

The first thing I did was start walking five to seven days a week for 30 minutes, and every two weeks I would add five minutes until I was walking for one hour. I cut out all soft drinks, tea, rice and bread. I drink water and Crystal Light sugar-free pink lemonade. Going to TOPS and getting on the scales every week helps keep me on track. This December will be one year for me that I have lost 60 pounds and kept it off. For the support of TOPS, visit the Web site at www.tops.org or call (800) 932-8677.

My TOPS diet:

Breakfast:
Coffee
Kashi Cereal (dietary fiber 6 grams or more)
Skim milk
Fruit
Water

Lunch:
Turkey sandwich (whole wheat bread)
or grilled chicken salad
Apple
6 Animal Crackers
Water

Snacks:
Nuts (handful of almonds)
Apple
6 Animal Crackers

Dinner:
Baked fish or chicken
Baked potato
Salad with low-fat dressing
Fruit
Water

Dessert:
Sugar-free Jell-O or
½ cup orange sherbet ice cream
or Animal Crackers

Vickie Little
Matthews / Union Power Cooperative

Cabbage soup?

Oh no, the scales couldn't be right! My weight just seemed to be going up again. I've always had to watch my weight. I lost weight as an adolescent when I stopped eating four homemade biscuits with butter at each meal. They would melt in my mouth. It was like a little taste of sunshine, but the sunshine put the pounds on me.

Now I was in my early 30s, a home economist and a mother of a young daughter. I wanted to shed about 10 pounds, so along came the cabbage soup diet. It sounded simple and easy. Just eat cabbage soup for one or two meals a day. I knew I could do that. I cooked up a big batch of soup to have in the refrigerator to eat after a hectic day at work. However, the cabbage soup diet only lasted a week. It tasted awful. Finally, I couldn't eat anymore, and I threw it in the ditch. The dog wouldn't even taste it either.

At age 57, I have found that the Curves diet plan of sensible, balanced nutrition and exercise works best for me, and I feel good!

Mary Kay Cox
Four Oaks / South River EMC

continued on page 20

Weight Watchers

Growing up in the South you know that fried foods are a part of everyone's daily meal consumption. After my daughter was born I topped out at 247 pounds. My friends at work talked me into joining Weight Watchers. It worked well. I lost 30 pounds in six months. During the sixth month I found my body craving foods that I could not have. I mean foods that I would not allow myself to consume. The support from the Weight Watchers meetings was helpful and gave insight to ways I could incorporate exercise into my daily schedule without taking time away from my family.

My daughter was born in 1999. I began the diet with Weight Watchers in 2001. Sure, I tried Atkins, South Beach and the Mayo Clinic diets. They were not easy to stick with. Those diets did not have a support system to hold me accountable for my weight loss. I have not strayed from the Weight Watchers Point System in the last five years. I currently weigh 181 pounds. With this diet I can eat regular foods, go to restaurants with my family and see the results in the size of my clothes and in the mirror.

Staci Harper
Lillington / South River EMC

Watch those salads!

The spring my daughter was 10 (she is now 32); I wanted to lose a few pounds. I always took her camping on vacation, so I decided to eat only salads for a few weeks to get ready for my bathing suit. I stuck to salads day in and day out.

At the end of the first week I weighed myself. To my shock and surprise, I had gained weight! Those unwanted pounds came from all the salad dressing I had put on all those salads.

Laura Davis
Yadkinville / EnergyUnited

Think of what you gain

I do something that works that most people don't do because they want the easy way out. Like I once did.

I use an eating plan of mostly healthy foods. I watch portion sizes and exercise, exercise, exercise. For a couple of years I tried half-heartedly to lose weight. Then, the day my sister told me she was getting married and wanted me to be her matron of honor, I decided I had to do something right away.

I have lost 63 pounds in a year. I feel great! You just have to commit yourself and be willing to do it, not just for yourself but your family as well. Because when mamma is happy everyone is happy. You gain so much by losing weight: confidence, self esteem and happiness. Good luck to anyone trying, and I hope I have inspired just one person out there to do it.

Chris Baker
Monroe / Union Power Cooperative

My DEW plan

I have spent a lot of my adult life dieting. It seems that all diets work while I am on them, but when I go off a diet I gain the weight back plus a few pounds. I started examining diets. Most diets have us eating what we should be eating and leaving off the foods that we should avoid. I decided I needed more than just a diet.

I thought up the acronym DEW, which stands for diet, exercise and water.

If we avoid some things like sugar, fats, starches, white breads and the like, our bodies would be much better off. If we start a replacement regime in our eating, wouldn't we become healthier? I have some concrete examples that I use. Instead of cakes, cookies, candies, pies and puddings, I allow myself to have any raw fruits that I want. Instead of meats that contain lots of fat, I allow myself to have as much beans, fish, chicken or turkey that I want. Instead of having a dessert at the end of the meal I allow myself to eat a garden or other type of salad before I eat my meal. I know I can naturally cut down on fats by eating foods that are known to cut down on LDL (bad cholesterol) such as oatmeal, vegetables, whole grains and the like.

I started drinking as much water as my body wants and cut down on the coffee and diet sodas. I don't guess there is anything inherently wrong with my coffee and diet sodas except that they cut down on the amount of water my body wants.

I guess the best thing I can do to help attain my ideal weight is to cut down on my couch time and get out and exercise. It is a known fact that any calories that we take in above what our body needs will be stored as fat.

Most diets work if accompanied by a change in lifestyle. You must commit to diet, exercise and water for the rest of your life.

Donald M. Campbell
Rutherfordton / Rutherford EMC

Send us your best Earn $50

Here are the themes in our **"Nothing Could Be Finer"** series. Send us your stories and pictures about these themes. If yours is chosen for publication, we'll send you $50. You don't have to be the best writer. Just tell it from your heart.

March 2007 Pests and Weeds
Tell us how you control them in your garden.
Deadline: January 15

April 2007 The Dumbest Souvenir I Ever Brought Home
Where did it come from and why? Send photos, if you have them.
Deadline: February 15

May 2007 How We Saved Energy
Good ideas for home, at work, or on the road.
Deadline: March 15

June 2007 One Time at Summer Camp Your best summer camp story. Send photos, if you have any.
Deadline: April 15

The Rules

1. Approximately 200 words or less.
2. One entry per household per month.
3. Photos are welcome. Digital photos must be 300 dpi and actual size.
4. E-mailed or typed, if possible. Otherwise, make it legible.
5. Include your name, electric co-op, mailing address and phone number.
6. If you want your entry returned, please include a self-addressed, stamped envelope. (We will not return others.)
7. We pay $50 for each submission published. We retain reprint rights.
8. We will post on our Web site more entries than we publish, but can't pay for those submissions. (Let us know if you don't agree to this.)
9. Send to: Nothing Finer, Carolina Country, 3400 Sumner Blvd., Raleigh, NC 27616
   Or by e-mail: finer@carolinacountry.com
   Or through the Web: www.carolinacountry.com

Soft drinks, sugar and your weight

Soft drinks can be found most anywhere in the world, but nowhere are they as ubiquitous as in the United States, where 450 different types are sold and more than 2.5 million vending machines dispense them around the clock, including in our schools. The American Beverage Association says that, in 2004, 28 percent of all beverages consumed in the U.S. were carbonated soft drinks.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture advises a 2,000 calorie-a-day limit as part of a healthy lifestyle, and no more than 10 to 12 teaspoons of sugar. However, between 1994 and 1996 Americans were averaging about 20.5 teaspoons a day, or 68.5 pounds of sugar a year. Over the past 16 years, the amount of sugar in American diets has increased by 28 percent, with about a third of it coming from soft drinks. A single 12-ounce can of soda has around 13 teaspoons of sugar, usually in the form of high-fructose corn syrup.

Some nutritionists say that consuming high-fructose corn syrup causes weight gain by interfering with the body's natural ability to suppress hunger feelings. Currently, 64.5 percent of adults over the age of 20 are overweight, 30.5 percent are obese and 4.7 percent are severely obese. According to Dr. Sonia Caprio, a Yale University professor of pediatric endocrinology, "The reality is that there is epidemiological work done in children as well as adults that links obesity and Type 2 diabetes with the consumption of sodas."

In response to such concerns, the nation's largest beverage makers—including Cadbury Schweppes, Coke and Pepsi—agreed in May 2006 to halt nearly all soda sales in public schools. Beginning in 2009, elementary and middle schools will sell only water and juice (with no added sweeteners), plus fat-free and low-fat milk. High schools will sell water, juice, sports drinks and diet soda. Diet sodas use artificial sweeteners, which add little or no calories, though some, such as aspartame, have been embroiled in controversy for years over their questionable health benefits and even possible links to cancer.

For those who can't do without their soda pop, natural varieties are growing in popularity and can be found at most health food markets. Many use cane juice to sweeten, because it is less processed but has many of the nutrients found in sugar cane. Others add no sweetener and instead let the real fruit ingredients do the job. Popular brands include: Steaz, a less carbonated but flavorful drink available in eight flavors; R.W. Knudsen fruit spritzers, which contain only sparkling water and natural flavors and juices and come in 16 flavors; Santa Cruz Organic sodas, which taste like fresh fruit juice with light carbonation and are made with organic ingredients in 10 flavors; Izze, which offers seven flavors that contain 100 percent pure fruit juice and sparkling water; and WaNu beverages, which taste like slightly less carbonated mainstream sodas.

To learn more: American Beverage Association, www.ameribev.org; Center for Science in the Public Interest, www.cspinet.org/new/200605031.html.

Washing our cars in our driveways sends gasoline, oil and residues from exhaust fumes into rivers, streams, creeks and wetlands.

Support your local carwash

Few people realize that washing our cars in our driveways is one of the most environmentally un-friendly chores we can do around the house. Unlike household waste water that enters sewers or septic systems and undergoes treatment before it is discharged into the environment, what runs off from your car goes right into storm drains—and eventually into rivers, streams, creeks and wetlands. After all, that water is loaded gasoline, oil and residues from exhaust fumes—as well as the harsh detergents being used for the washing itself.

On the other hand, laws require commercial carwash facilities to drain their wastewater into sewer systems, so it gets treated before it is discharged back into the great outdoors. And commercial car washes use computer controlled systems and high-pressure nozzles and pumps that minimize water usage.

The International Carwash Association, reports that automatic car washes use less than half the water of even the most careful home car washer. According to one report, washing a car at home typically uses between 80 and 140 gallons of water, while a commercial car wash averages less than 45 gallons per car.

If you must wash your car at home, choose a biodegradable soap specifically formulated for automotive parts, such as Simple Green's Car Wash or Gliptone's Wash 'n Glow. Or you can make your own biodegradable car wash by mixing one cup of liquid dishwashing detergent and 3/4 cup of powdered laundry detergent (each should be chlorine- and phosphate-free and non-petroleum-based) with three gallons of water. This concentrate can then be used sparingly with water over exterior car surfaces.

To learn more: International Carwash Association, www.carcarecentral.com; Simple Green, www.simplegreen.com; Freedom Waterless Car Wash, www.freedomwaterlesscarwash.com; Puget Sound Carwash Association, www.charitycarwash.org.

Got an Environmental Question?
Send it to: EarthTalk, c/o E/The Environmental Magazine, P.O. Box 5098, Westport, CT 06881; submit it at: www.emagazine.com/earthtalk/thisweek, or e-mail: earthtalk@emagazine.com. Read past columns at: www.emagazine.com/earthtalk/archives.php.

FUEL TYPES

Selecting heating and cooling systems

While the price of everything seems to be increasing, using electricity is still the best value for your money. Electric cooperatives work hard to keep electricity as a great value, even as the cost of other commodities increase.

Even so, there are several variables to consider when selecting a system for your home's heating and cooling needs. Your monthly electric bill is a primary one. The initial cost of the system is another. Also, consider the lifetime maintenance costs.

Calculating the relative cost of fuels is simple. First calculate the cost of one Btu of each fuel type. This is done by dividing the utility rate or price per gallon, cord, etc., by the Btu heat content in that amount of fuel. Next divide this result by the efficiency of the heating appliance. Without including efficiency in your calculation, you cannot make a fair comparison. An electric water heater is nearly 100 percent efficient while a gas water heater is only about 80 percent efficient. Therefore it will take five units of gas energy input to accomplish the same work as four units of electric energy.

Typical heat contents for common fuels

- Natural gas: 1,025 Btu/cubic foot
- Oil: 138,700 Btu/gallon
- Propane: 91,000 Btu/gallon
- Electricity: 3,414 Btu/kilowatt-hour
- Firewood: 22,000,000 Btu/cord
- Corn: 448,000 Btu/bushel

Typical efficiencies

- Heating oil furnace: 55–65%
- Old gas/propane furnace: 60–70%
- New gas/propane furnace: 80–85%
- Electric heat: 99%
- Heat pump (air source): 200–250%
- Heat pump (ground source): 300–350%

In many areas, geothermal heat pumps are the least expensive to operate because they tap into the natural heat in the ground. Their drawback is a significantly higher installation cost.

During mildly cold weather, the heat pump is less expensive to operate than the furnace. As the outdoor temperature drops and the heat pump becomes less efficient, the gas or oil furnace takes over. A contractor can adjust the changeover temperature based on the relative local cost of gas/oil and electricity.

During mildly cold weather, the heat pump is less expensive to operate than the furnace. As the outdoor temperature drops and the heat pump becomes less efficient, the gas or oil furnace takes over.

Btu (British thermal unit)

A Btu is the amount of energy that will heat one pound of water by 1 degree Fahrenheit. It is approximately equal to the heat content available from one wooden match.

Geothermal heat pump

Geothermal heat pumps operate like air-to-air heat pumps, moving rather than creating heat; however, they use the ground or water as a heat source and heat sink, rather than outside air. And, because the ground or water temperatures are much more constant year-round (warmer in winter and cooler in summer) geothermal heat pumps operate more efficiently than air-to-air heat pumps.

Geothermal heat pumps are becoming increasingly popular due to their heating and cooling energy efficiency, and related environmental and ownership benefits, especially where ground water is available or soil conditions are favorable.

In the heating mode, a geothermal heat pump typically extracts two-thirds (or more) of the needed energy from the earth or water loop and moves it indoors. Only one-third of the energy needed is purchased power, primarily used to run the compressor. In the summer, geothermal heat pumps move heat from indoors into the relatively cool earth or water loop.

Geothermal heat pumps have lower operating, maintenance, and life-cycle costs, increased reliability, and provide greater comfort than other heating and cooling systems.

Sources

Haywood Electric Membership Corporation, www.haywoodemc.com, "Power Lines", Carolina Country, January 2006.

Blue Ridge Electric Membership Corporation, www.blueridgeemc.com

Seattle Post-Intelligencer, http://seattlepi.nwsource.com

ENERGYSTAR APPLIANCES

If you are interested in managing your energy costs, then you should look for the Energy Star whenever you purchase an appliance for your home including:washers, dryers, dishwashers, water heaters, air conditioners, heat pumps and many more.

The Energy Star label is the easiest way for consumers to recognize the most efficient heating systems, cooling systems, appliances and electronics.

The Energy Star label means that the product wearing the label is in the top 15 percent of efficiency compared to similar products. Energy Star appliances have been identified by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the U.S. Department of Energy as being the most energy efficient. The federal government also requires that most appliances have a yellow and black Energy Guide label to forecast the annual energy consumption and operating cost for each appliance.

The average household spends $1,500 a year on energy bills, nearly half of which goes to heating and cooling. EPA estimates that if one in 10 U.S. households used heating and cooling equipment that has earned the Energy Star label, the change would prevent an estimated 17 billion pounds of greenhouse gas emissions.

When heating equipment reaches 15 or more years of age, EPA and the U.S. Dept. of Energy recommend that homeowners consider a more energy-efficient replacement.

The Energy Star symbol is now recognized in Canada, Australia, Europe, China and many other countries. More than 9,000 organizations have become Energy Star partners and are committed to improving the energy efficiency of products, homes and businesses.

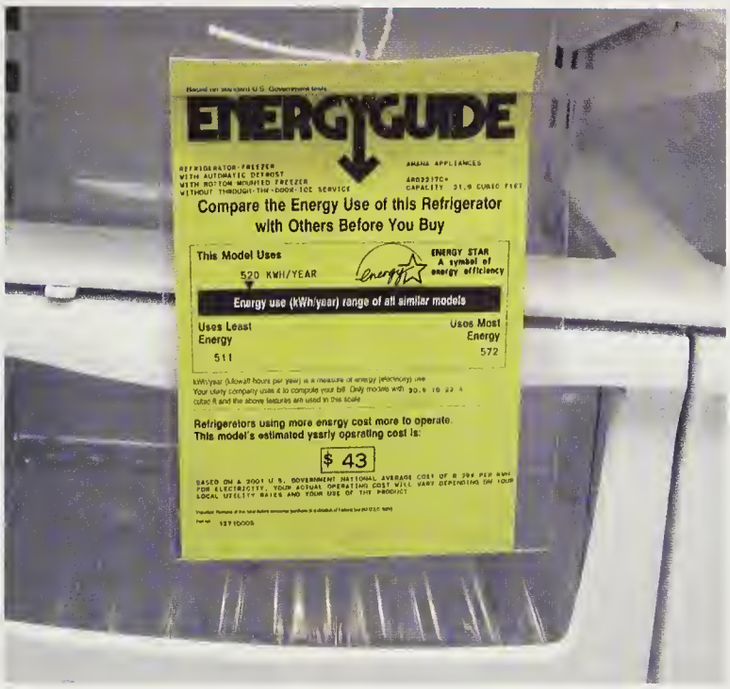
You can make your home more energy efficient by insisting on the Energy Star label whenever you buy any home appliance. You can find out more information about Energy Star and advanced household appliances at the Energy Star website: www.energystar.gov. Or call 1-888-STAR-YES.

Energy Star homes

The Energy Star home rating means that the homebuilder has taken extraordinary steps to design and build a structure that meets the Environmental Protection Agency's strict standards for energy efficiency. These homes are inspected by a trained and qualified home energy rater, who verifies that the home has the characteristics normally associated with low energy costs. To identify whether a home has earned the Energy Star rating, check for a 3" x 5" blue label on the inside of the electrical box.

When you are ready to shop for an Energy Star qualified home, look for the following specifications:

- The house was tested for airtightness with a blower-door test.
- The ducts were tested for airtightness with a blower-door test.
- The heating system bears the Energy Star label.
- The air conditioning system bears a separate Energy Star label on the outdoor compressor unit.


ENERGY GUIDE
Compare the Energy Use of this Refrigerator with Others Before You Buy
This Model Uses
520 KWH/YEAR
ENERGY STAR
A symbol of energy efficiency
Energy use (kWh/year) range of all similar models
Uses Least Energy
511
Uses Most Energy
572
Refrigerators using more energy cost more to operate.
This model's estimated yearly operating cost is:
$ 43

The Energy Star label is the easiest way for consumers to recognize the most efficient heating and cooling systems, appliances and electronics.

- The windows and all major kitchen and laundry appliances bear the Energy Star label.
- The home has a central ventilation system, or at least high-efficiency, quiet exhaust fans in the kitchen and bathrooms.

For more information on Energy Star qualified homes, visit www.energystar.gov/homes.

Blower door test

Professional energy auditors use blower door tests to help determine a home's airtightness. Here are some reasons for establishing the proper building tightness:

- Reducing energy consumption due to air leakage
- Avoiding moisture condensation problems
- Avoiding uncomfortable drafts caused cold air leaks
- Making sure that the home's air quality is not too contaminated by indoor air pollution.

A blower door is a powerful fan that mounts into the frame of an exterior door. The fan pulls air out of the house, lowering the air pressure inside. The higher outside air pressure then flows in through all unsealed cracks and openings. The auditors may use a smoke pencil to detect air leaks. These tests determine the air infiltration rate of a building.

Sources

John Krigger, Saturn Resource Management. www.srmi.biz. Author of numerous energy efficiency books including Surviving the Seasons and Residential Energy: Cost Savings and Comfort for Existing Buildings

North Carolina Association of Electric Cooperatives

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

U.S. Dept. of Energy, Energy Efficiency and Renewable, www.eere.energy.gov

MY FIRST STRIPED BASS OF THE NEW YEAR

By Frank "Jake" Jakob

This was the absolute best surf fishing I ever had in over 35 years.

I was cruising the beach while surf fishing Corolla on the northern Outer Banks Jan. 3, 2006. It was afternoon and I was looking for signs of fish when I came upon a bunker slick about a quarter-mile off the beach that was over 10 miles long with the birds picking above but no sign of fish. It was a cold, windy, gloomy winter afternoon, and I was alone on the beach.

So I sat in my truck watching the bait for about three hours when all of sudden the blues started bursting all over. I had to wade the slough and make long casts over the bar with my 11-foot Lamiglass conventional and Ambassador 6500c3 with a 3-ounce Hopkins.

After walking through the slough and catching and releasing several big blues in the 15-pound range, I saw the bass swimming around me. Well that made my day, so I switched outfits. (I carry a dozen or so with me all the time.) I picked a 9-foot Lamiglass with a 150 Van Stahl spinning reel loaded with 15-pound test Stren. Since the fish were in close chasing bunker I used a 5-inch Neils Master plug tied directly to my fluorocarbon leader with a loop knot.

Much to my surprise a striper hit it immediately on a short cast. I was in no hurry, so I fought the bass lightly. I knew it was a big fish because it shook its head several times with its mouth open on top of the water trying to spit the plug.

When I beached the bass, it still had its mouth wide open and the Neils Master plug was stuck side ways like a stick propping the fish's mouth wide open. I called my buddy Neil, who had come by later, and he took the picture.

The bass was not even hooked. It opened its mouth to swallow the bait (plug) and jammed it between its top and bottom mouth (see photo, left). Both the belly and tail hook were free swinging. Now that's the honest-to-God truth.

We caught fish well into the night and came back the next day to do the same. You had to have patience and wait the fish out both days in the afternoon. On plugs, I caught and released over 55 bass to 35 pounds. What a way to start a New Year.

Jake Jakub can be reached at PO Box 249, Salvo, NC 279872. Phone: (252) 987-2799. E-mail: capehatreal@beachlink.com

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Healthy Recipes

To start the new year

Raspberry Tossed Salad

- 4 cups torn red leaf lettuce
- 1 package (5 ounces) spring mix salad greens
- 1 cup fresh raspberries
- 1 cup sliced fresh mushrooms
- ½ cup julienned red onion
- ¼ cup crumbled feta or blue cheese
- ½ cup pecan halves, toasted
- 2 tablespoons 100% raspberry fruit spread, melted
- 2 tablespoons raspberry vinegar
- 2 tablespoons canola oil
- ⅛ teaspoon salt
- Dash pepper

In a salad bowl, combine the first seven ingredients. In a jar with a tight-fitting lid, combine the fruit spread, vinegar, oil, salt and pepper; shake well. Pour over salad; toss gently to coat.

Yield: 8 servings

Nutritional Analysis: One serving (1½ cups) equals 102 calories, 7 gm fat (1 g saturated fat), 4 mg cholesterol, 108 mg sodium, 8 g carbohydrate, 3 g fiber, 3 g protein.

Diabetic Exchanges: 1½ fat, 1 vegetable.

Delicious JELL-O Buttermilk Salad

(from Ann Moore, Blowing Rock)

- 1 large sugar free Jell-o package (orange or cranberry is good choice)
- 2 cups low-fat buttermilk
- 1 (12-ounce) low-fat Cool Whip
- 1 (15-ounce) crushed pineapple in its own juice
- ½ cup (or more) toasted pecans, whole or pieces

Mix Jell-o in two cups boiling water. Add pineapple with its juice. Let cool. Add buttermilk, low-fat Cool Whip and pecans. Mix well, pour into large dish, and refrigerate to firm up. Looks good served on lettuce with small dollop of low-fat mayonnaise. Crackers can be added.

Hawaiian Wedding Cake

- 1 package (18¼ ounces) yellow cake mix
- 1¼ cups 1% buttermilk
- 4 egg whites
- 1 egg
- 1 package (8 ounces) reduced-fat cream cheese, cubed
- 1 cup cold 2% milk
- 1 package (1 ounce) sugar-free instant vanilla pudding mix
- 2 cans (one 20 ounces and one 8 ounces) unsweetened crushed pineapple, drained
- 1 carton (8 ounces) frozen fat-free whipped topping, thawed
- ½ cup flaked coconut, toasted

In a mixing bowl, beat the dry cake mix, buttermilk, egg whites and egg on low speed until moistened. Beat on high for 2 minutes. Transfer to a 13-by-9-by-2-inch baking pan coated with nonstick cooking spray. Bake at 350 degrees for 25–30 minutes or until a toothpick inserted near the center comes out clean. Cool on a wire rack.

In another mixing bowl, beat cream cheese until fluffy. Gradually beat in milk. Gradually add pudding mix. Spread over cake. Spoon pineapple over pudding mixture. Top with whipped topping. Sprinkle with coconut. Store in the refrigerator.

Yield 18 servings

Nutrition Analysis: One piece equals 221 calories, 5 g fat (2 g saturated fat), 17 mg cholesterol, 378 mg sodium, 38 g carbohydrate, 1 g fiber, 6 g protein.

Diabetic Exchanges: 2 starch, 1 fat, ½ fruit.

Pineapple Shrimp Kabobs

- ¼ cup each reduced-sodium soy sauce, balsamic vinegar and honey
- 1 garlic clove, minced
- 1 pound uncooked medium shrimp, peeled and deveined
- 1 large green pepper, cut into 1-inch pieces
- 1 can (8 ounces) pineapple chunks, drained

In a bowl, combine the soy sauce, vinegar, honey and garlic. Set aside ⅓ cup. On eight metal or soaked wooden skewers, thread the shrimp, green pepper and pineapple. Place in a shallow dish; pour marinade over kabobs. Cover and chill for 1 hour. Cover and chill reserved marinade.

Coat grill rack with nonstick cooking spray before starting the grill. Drain and discard marinade from kabobs. Grill, uncovered, over medium heat for 3 minutes, turning once. Baste with reserved marinade. Grill 3–4 minutes longer or until shrimp turn pink, turning and basting frequently.

Yield: 4 servings

Nutritional Analysis: One serving (2 kabobs) equals 154 calories, 1 g fat (trace saturated fat), 135 mg cholesterol, 428 mg sodium, 21 g carbohydrate, 1 g fiber, 15 g protein.

Diabetic Exchanges: 2 very lean meat, 1 vegetable, 1 fruit.

Parmesan Potato Wedges

- 4 large baking potatoes (2 pounds)
- ¼ cup grated Parmesan cheese
- 1 teaspoon garlic salt
- ½ teaspoon garlic powder
- ½ teaspoon dried oregano
- ½ teaspoon paprika

Line a baking sheet with heavy-duty foil. Cut each potato into eight wedges; place on foil. Coat with nonstick cooking spray. Sprinkle with Parmesan cheese and seasonings. Bake at 400 degrees for 30 minutes or until tender.

Yield: 8 servings

Nutritional Analysis: One serving (4 wedges) equals 129 calories, trace fat (trace saturated fat), 1 mg cholesterol, 249 mg sodium, 29 g carbohydrate, 3 g fiber, 3 g protein.

Diabetic Exchange: 1½ starch

Chewy Coconut Macaroons

- 2½ cups flaked coconut
- ¾ cup all-purpose flour
- ⅛ teaspoon salt
- 1 can (14 ounces) fat-free sweetened condensed milk
- 1½ teaspoons almond extract

In a bowl, toss together the coconut, flour and salt. Stir in sweetened condensed milk and almond extract until blended. (Mixture will be thick and sticky.)

Drop by rounded teaspoonfuls 3-inches apart on baking sheets lightly coated with nonstick cooking spray. Bake at 300 degrees for 18–22 minutes or until edges are lightly browned. Cool for 2 minutes before removing to wire racks.

Yield: 32 cookies

Nutritional Analysis: One cookie equals 83 calories, 3 g fat (2 g saturated fat), 1 mg cholesterol, 41 mg sodium, 13 g carbohydrate, trace fiber, 2 g protein.

Diabetic Exchange: 1 starch

Southwestern Broccoli Cheese Soup

- 4 cups water
- 4 reduced-sodium chicken bouillon cubes or vegetable bouillon cubes
- 4 cups fresh broccoli florets
- 3 cups frozen southern-style hash brown potatoes
- 1 cup chopped carrots
- 1 cup chopped celery
- ½ teaspoon each salt and pepper
- 3 tablespoons all-purpose flour
- 2 cups fat-free milk
- 6 ounces reduced-fat process cheese (Velveeta), cubed
- 1 cup chunky salsa

In a large saucepan, combine the water, bouillon cubes, vegetables, salt and pepper. Bring to boil. Reduce heat; cover and simmer for 8–10 minutes or until the vegetables are tender. Combine the flour and milk until smooth; gradually stir into the soup. Bring to a boil; cook and stir for 2 minutes or until thickened. Reduce heat to low. Add the cheese; cook and stir until cheese is melted. Add the salsa; cook and stir until heated through.

Yield: 9 servings (about 2 quarts)

Nutrition Analysis: One serving (1 cup) equals 160 calories, 3 g fat (1 g saturated fat), 9 mg cholesterol, 883 mg sodium, 27 g carbohydrate, 3 g fiber, 9 g protein.

Diabetic Exchanges: 1½ starch, 1 vegetable

Black-eyed Pea Salsa

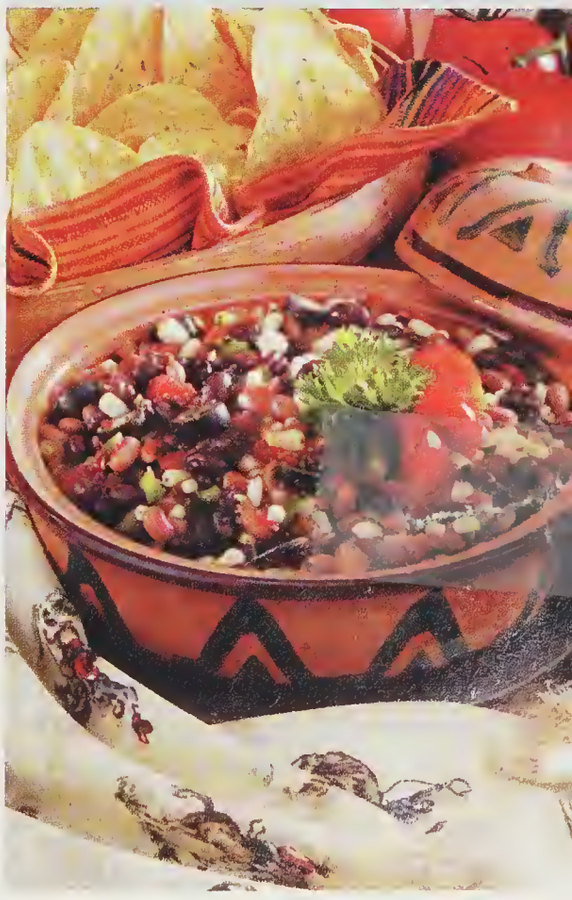
- 1 can (15½ ounces) black-eyed peas, rinsed and drained
- 1 can (15 ounces) black beans, rinsed and drained
- 1 can (11 ounces) shoepeg corn, drained
- 1⅓ cups mild salsa
- 1 cup medium salsa
- ¾ cup chopped green pepper
- ½ cup chopped green onions
- 1 can (2¼ ounces) chopped ripe olives, drained
- 1 jalapeno pepper, seeded and chopped
- 1 envelope Italian salad dressing mix
- 1 teaspoon ground cumin
- ½ teaspoon garlic powder
- Tortilla chips

In a bowl, combine the first 12 ingredients. Serve with tortilla chips.

Yield: 6 cups

Nutrition Analysis: One serving (¼ cup salsa, calculated without chips) equals 58 calories, trace fat, 0 cholesterol, 411 mg. Sodium, 11 g carbohydrate, 2 g fiber, 2 g protein.

Diabetic exchange: 1 vegetable, ½ starch.



Recipes are by Taste of Home magazine. For a sample copy, send $2 to Taste of Home, Suite 4321, PO Box 990, Greendale WI 53129-0990. Visit the Web page at www.tasteofhome.com

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Shag Tag

There's a new North Carolina Dept. of Motor Vehicles "Shag Tag" available. The tags, which at press time were soon to be available through local NCDMV offices, say "I'd Rather Be Shaggin" and show a pair of brown loafers. They are $15 for a numbered tag. Personalized tags cost $60 and you are given four spaces to say what you want on the tag. South River EMC member Dwayne Baggett helped organize the push for the shag tag, and reports that $5 of each license plate fee sale will be donated to the Hall of Fame Foundation to help shaggers in need.

NCDMV (919) 715-7000 (main number)
www.ncdot.org/dmv
www.ncshagtag.com

Southport historical postcards online

The Southport Times has unveiled their collection of historical Southport area postcards for online viewing. The collection of more than 200 postcards, converted to digital format, includes vintage postcards of Southport, Oak Island and Bald Head Island dating back to the early 1900s. It includes very rare postcards of the Cape Fear Lighthouse, the Price's Creek Lighthouse and the Oak Island Life Saving Station, along with modern postcards dating through 2006. They provide valuable insight as to what the Southport area has looked like in years gone by. The collection can be viewed online.

www.southporttimes.com/postcards

Attic Tent

This patented product is specially engineered to create an air transfer barrier between attics and living areas, saving homeowners money on their heating and cooling bills. The lightweight tent fits around the attic stair frame to stop energy loss through and around the attic door and stairs. The tent fits standard folding attic stair sizes and is installed using a staple and caulk gun. In addition to reducing energy loss, the tent keeps out airborne particles of dust and fiberglass from attic insulation. The company who makes it, Insulsure, Inc., is based in Mooresville. Attic Tents, which can be also installed over knee wall doors and attic scuttle holes, sell for $189.95 to $219.95 (if ordered online).

(877) 660-5640
www.insulsure.com

Ray Scott CD

Country music artist Ray Scott wrote or co-wrote all 13 songs on his CD, "My Kind of Music." Songs range from "Different Kind of Cowboy," "Dirty Shirt" (with a working man as a hero), "Rats Don't Race," "Fly With An Angel," and "Bear With Me Lord." Scott, known for his smoky voice, was born in the farming community of Semora and formed his first band in Raleigh. "My Kind of Music" sells for $13.99.

(866) 759-4843
www.rayscott.com

Bird migration video

A new DVD that shows Mattamuskeet National Wildlife Refuge during a bird migration is now available. The 50-minute DVD, entitled "A Winter Day—Lake Mattamuskeet," begins as the sun is coming up over the lake. Video footage goes through a typical day for wildlife at this beautiful refuge in Hyde County. It includes a sunset, and ends with a Great Horned Owl in front of the moon. Forty-seven species of birds and other wildlife "star" in the production, with no narration. The audio has the natural sounds of the birds and wildlife, underscored with music arranged by musician and songwriter Blake Scott. Videos can be ordered from the Mattamuskeet Foundation and are priced as follows: $24.95 each; N.C. Sales tax is $1.75 each; shipping for the first copy is $3, second copy add $1 each. The videos will be distributed free of charge to the Boys and Girls Clubs of America, nursing homes, assisted living facilities and Ronald McDonald Houses across the U.S., as well as state and national parks in the state. The Mattamuskeet Foundation is based in Ayden. It is now working on a second video showing Pocosin Lakes National Wildlife Refuge, in a planned series.

(252) 746-4221
www.mattamuskeet.org

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Building a better bulb. Since Edison invented the light bulb, little has changed in the world of incandescent lighting. Fluorescent lighting was introduced in the Thirties, but the harsh light is hardly appropriate for most of the rooms in a house. Now, there's a better way… the Balanced Spectrum® Floor Lamp. Its 27-watt compact bulb is the equivalent of a 150-watt ordinary light bulb… only it uses 70% less energy. What's more, the bulb lasts 10 times longer than ordinary bulbs, so there's less waste that ends up in landfills. Still not convinced? Think about this: If every American family replaced just one of their lamps with a Balanced Spectrum® Floor Lamp, it would save enough energy to light more than 2.5 million homes for a year and prevent greenhouse gases equivalent to the emissions of nearly 800,000 cars.

New longer life bulb now SAVES $77 over the life of one Balanced Spectrum® bulb!"

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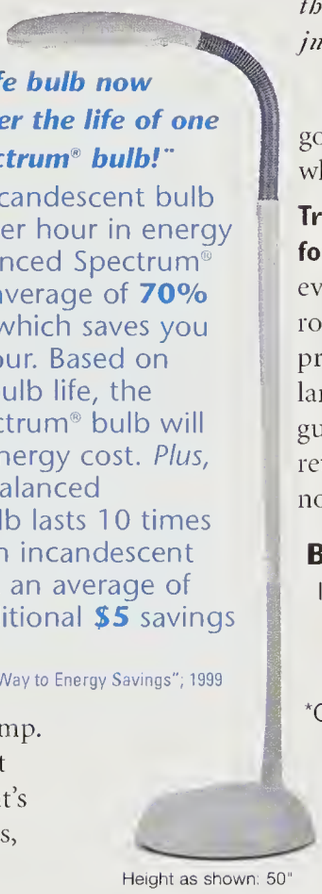
**Source: "Lighting the Way to Energy Savings"; 1999



Height as shown: 50"

Better for your eyes, better for our environment. In addition to the energy and bulb savings, this lamp brings the benefits of natural sunlight indoors. You will see with more clarity and less eyestrain during a variety of activities, from reading and writing to crafts and hobbies. The lamp features a "soft-touch, flicker-free" rocker switch that's easier to use than traditional toggle or twist switches. Its flexible gooseneck design enables you to get light where you need it.

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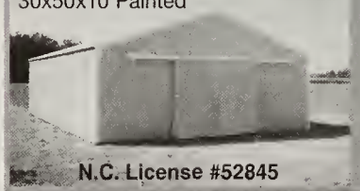

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Carolina country if...

...you strung
persimmon blossoms
to wear as necklaces and bracelets...

From Jean Clark, Southmont and Florida

From Jean Clark, Southmont and Florida

... You strung persimmon blossoms to wear as necklaces and bracelets until your grandmother informed you that the persimmon tree sprang up where the old outhouse once stood.

... You picked June bugs from blackberry vines, tied strings to their legs, watched them fly in circles around your head, and then returned them safely to the blackberry vines.

... When you lost weight, someone told you, "You sure have fallen off."

From Diana Davis, Surry County

... You find a bluetail lizard tap dancing in your bathroom sink and you swat it and the tail breaks off and starts dancing with the lizard.

... Grandma flushes bluetail lizards down the john.

... Grandpa shoots the turtles in his pond, out his living room window with a .22 rifle.

From Lorena Bumgarner, Cherryville

... You woke up to the jingle, "Nothing Could Be Finer Than to Be in Carolina in the Morning."

... You say "up 'ere and down 'ere."

From Paul Senter, Elkin

... You know that cooter snappers and crawdads are better for catching cats in the Yadkin River in early spring and that hellgrammites are good anytime.

... You know that a thistle pig and a groundhog is the same animal.

... Your father needed only to touch his belt buckle to get you young'ns to be quiet.

... Cucumber boats always floated better in the still water of the creek.

From Karen Wolfe

... You know that the best way to grow something is just to throw the seeds out into the wind.

... Your favorite pets have been green anoles you have caught in your backyard.

From Tommy Tyler, Autryville

... You know that Brunswick stew and real barbecue can only be cooked on oak or hickory fires.

... All small cracker snacks are called "nabs" regardless of manufacturer.

... Grape soda is a purple coke.

... The real drink for nabbing is a brownie.

From Faye Butler, Raeford

... You brought water up out of a ditch and strained it through a toe-sack to remove the crawdads before using the water in the tobacco transplanter.

... You got the razor strap on the wall if you didn't behave.

... You climbed the china tree or rolled a small hoop with a stick.

... You helped prepare apples, cabbage, etc. to make chow-chow.

From Fay Williams, Weeksville

... Your grandpa gave you your first job at age 7 or 8 pickin' buckets of taters in the field, and you got a ticket for each bucket and cashed them in for money on Saturday morning.

... Your grandpa's "old maid" cousin Minnie came to visit, made you a dipper brush from a tree twig, then parched some flour and put it in her empty snuff can so you could pretend to be dippin' snuff.

... Your grandpa's outhouse had one hole smaller than the other for the children to use.

From Les Brown, McDowell County

... You made a whistle by cutting a split in a wheat straw joint.

... You caught horny heads with red worms and a cane pole.

... You caught your momma's chicken while fishing with red worms and a cane pole.

... You searched for gizzard rocks in the chicken lot.

... You dove from the top girder of an iron span bridge.

... The whole family shucked corn by kerosene lantern, and the boys hoped to find a red ear that would prophesy getting a pretty girl.

... You tried to tie a tight knot in "love knot" vine (dodder) to see if she loves you.

... You "hoped" (helped) somebody do something.

... Your high school played basketball against other schools in a barn or shrubbery packing house.

... You used an old carburetor as a toy bulldozer.

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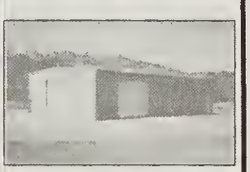

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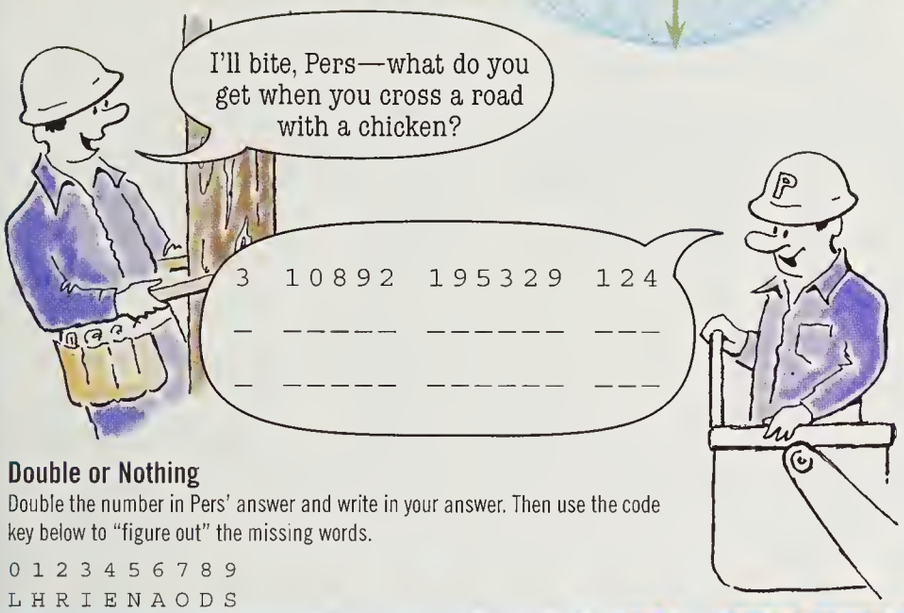


Double or Nothing

Double the number in Pers' answer and write in your answer. Then use the code key below to "figure out" the missing words.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
L H R I E N A O D S

Domi-no.S

		2			2				
H	D	O	M	N	O	P	C	E	R

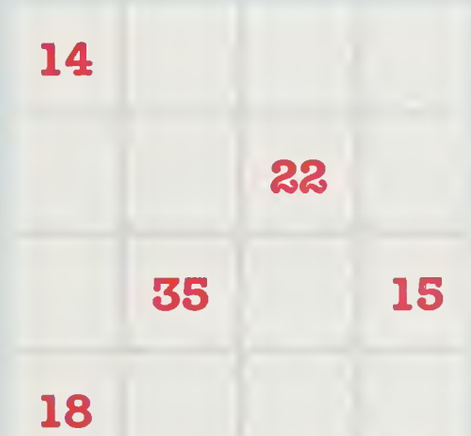
Letters stand for digits in this multiplication problem. Repeated letters stand for repeated digits. Given O=2, can you replace the missing digits that show you COMPREHEND? Hint: First find the value of the two Ds.

X 2 O

	2								
C	O	M	P	R	E	H	E	N	D

It's Number Fun!

Insert numbers 1 through 11 in the 11 empty squares so that each red number is the sum of the adjacent empty squares—right, left, up and down, but not diagonally—that touch that red square. Use each number once. Two squares are not included in any total.



For answers, please see page 34.

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SOUTHERN exposure

It is no surprise that euphemisms are making their appearance on all levels. After all, what's good for the federal government is good for local governments.

Every day we read and hear about

"Benchmarks":
2,800 casualties (soldiers dead) in October '06.

"Collateral damage":
to non-combatants (civilians) and their property.

"Forced disarmament":
war.

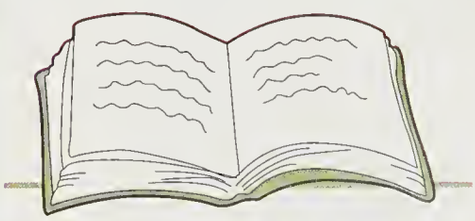
"Free speech zone":
no free speech beyond this point.

"Interrogation techniques":
torture.

"Time to move on":
we're not going to talk about that any more.

"New and improved":
smaller and more expensive.

This list could go on and on. So it was no surprise to read the new sign designating Henderson County's new jail: "Community Corrections Resource Center." Sign painters get paid by the letter, so I expect taxes will continue to go up.



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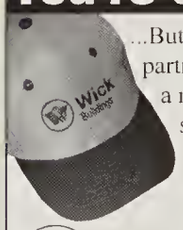

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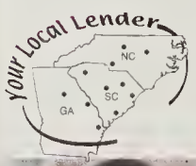

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January Events

The exhibit "Grandma Moses: Grandmother to the Nation" runs January 27–April 22 at the Reynolda House Museum in Winston-Salem. Call (336) 758-5150 or visit www.reynoldahouse.org.

Photo credit: Sugaring Off, 1945, Anna Mary Robertson "Grandma" Moses (1860–1961), Fenimore Art Museum, Cooperstown, NY, © 2006 Grandma Moses Properties Co., New York.

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(919) 220-5429, www.ncmls.org

Gospel Showcase
Jan. 13, Maxton
(910) 844-6336

Three Dog Night
Jan. 13, Fayetteville
(910) 323-1991
www.community-concerts.com

"The Rainbow Fish"
Jan. 23, Yanceyville
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www.ccarts@caswell.k12.nc.us

"Cinderella"
Jan. 26–Feb. 18, Fayetteville
(910) 323-4233
www.cfrt.org

The Temptations
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African American Cultural Celebration
Jan. 27, Raleigh
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www.ncmuseumofhistory.org

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Grandma Moses: Grandmother to the Nation
Jan. 27–April 22,
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(336) 758-5150
www.reynoldahouse.org

Arsenal Archaeology: Seeking a Lost Past
Through Jan. 28, Fayetteville
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www.ncartnuseum.org

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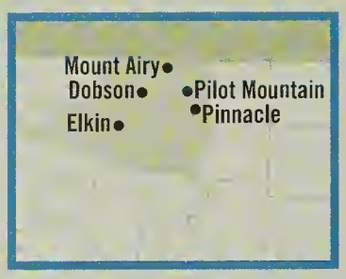

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CAROLINA COUNTRY adventures

You just can't miss the distinctive craggy knob atop Pilot Mountain State Park. The Saura Indians called it Jomeokee, meaning the "Great Guide." Today, folks still eye the jutting formation, called Big Pinnacle, for position. The park is one of many attractions in this friendly region. Mount Airy offers retro fun dedicated to Andy Griffith's long-running television show. Visitors can see the Mayberry Courthouse, take a squad car tour or get a trim at Floyd's City Barber Shop, where owner Russell Hiatt has been cutting hair for more than 50 years. The Mount Airy Museum of Regional History has exhibits on the Saura Indians and the railroad and a panaromic view. Scenic Elkin's downtown includes an old-tyme store that sells candles and cooking items. Locals get the scoop, ice cream and otherwise, at Speedy Chef. Vineyards are springing up in the area and Elkin has two: Elkin Creek and Grassy Creek. In Dobson, visitors can tour a 33,000 square-foot winery. Shelton Vineyards offers tastings of five wines daily, and its Harvest Grill Restaurant boasts artisan-style cheeses. Pilot Mountain's main street includes antique shops and Blue Mountain Herbs. An intriguing collection of old gas station memorabilia, including vintage gas pumps, can be spied there through a dusty storefront.

Three top spots:

World's largest open-face granite quarry: About two miles outside of Mount Airy, the quarry is shaped like an enormous oyster shell and covers about 90 acres under operation. Many of Mount Airy's homes, churches and businesses are constructed from its granite. Visit the observation area from Sunday to Saturday. (800) 227-6242 or www.ncgranite.com/largestquarry.asp

Hobart Jones

World's largest open-face granite quarry

Pilot Mountain State Park: About 14 miles south of Mount Airy, the park has two sections. The mountain section includes Big Pinnacle and Little Pinnacle and contains family campsites, visitor facilities and hiking trails. Views look out over a colorful patchwork quilt made up of hundreds of Piedmont square miles. A flat, more primitive section centers around the Yadkin River, offering a canoe access site and youth group camping. (336) 325-2355 or www.ils.unc.edu/parkproject/visit/pimo/home.html

Horne Creek Living Historical Farm: You can see vanishing breeds of farm animals and learn how to make lye soap at this attraction in Pinnacle. Costumed guides let visitors see, smell, touch, and hear things once common in rural North Carolina such as cider making and woodworking. (336) 325-2298 or www.ah.dcr.state.nc.us/sections/hs/horne/horne.htm

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By Carla Burgess

Native azaleas for the home garden

Deciduous azaleas are lesser known than their evergreen cousins, but their beauty and variety are unsurpassed. There is a wide range of choices in size, flower color and season of bloom, and many are fragrant. Both types of azaleas belong to the rhododendron family, but evergreen azaleas are of Asian origin. Most deciduous azaleas are native to North America, with 16 species found in the United States.

Many deciduous azaleas are easy to grow in the home landscape. The wild forms are varied and beautiful, but many cultivated varieties and hybrids have also been developed that improve on the species. One very desirable trait of most all the native species is that they shed their dead flowers, unlike evergreen azaleas.

A pinxter azalea, Rhododendron periclymenoides, *blooms at Sarah P. Duke Gardens.*

Almost all native azaleas have long, tubular flowers. This, combined with the sweet fragrance of many species, explains why people sometimes call them "bush honeysuckle." Flower colors include white, pink, yellow, orange and red. Depending on the species, the shrubs may be low-growing, medium-sized or tall, upright or thicket-forming. Blooming season ranges from early spring to late summer. Deciduous azaleas prefer slightly acidic soils, like evergreen azaleas, but are tolerant of a wider range of soil moisture. With so many choices, almost every North Carolina gardener should be able to find native azaleas suitable for their growing conditions. Here are a few selections:

Flame azalea *(Rhododendron calendulaceum)* sets the mountains afire in late spring with its bright, orange-yellow flowers. A great choice for mountain gardens, it dislikes excessive heat. It may grow to 12 feet. **Florida azalea** *(R. austrinum)* is an easy-to-grow early bloomer with large, very fragrant yellow blossoms. It may grow to 15 feet. **Piedmont azalea** *(R. canescens)*, the most abundant species in the Southeast, has delicately scented flowers that are white to pink. It usually has an upright shrub habit, growing to 15 feet, but it may form colonies in the right situation. **Pinxter azalea** *(R. periclymenoides)* has varying habits, from low and thicket-forming to upright (6 to 12 feet). The species usually has light pink flowers. The variety 'Purple' has lavender-purple blooms. **Sweet azalea** *(R. arborescens)* has white to light pink flowers with a powerful fragrance akin to heliotrope. It has distinct red pistils and filaments. This azalea likes consistently moist soil and ranges from 8 to 20 feet.

Azaleas may be planted year-round, but winter and early spring are especially good times. Mail-order sources offer the largest selection. One of the best ways to choose your favorite species is to visit a garden in bloom. The N.C. Arboretum in Asheville (www.ncarboretum.org/Horticulture/Azalea_Repository.htm) has a large demonstration garden that features wild species along with many cultivars and hybrids. Plan a trip in June and you can also take in the sight of thousands of blooming flame azaleas along the Blue Ridge Parkway. *Azaleas* by Fred Galle and *Growing and Propagating Showy Native Woodland Plants* by Richard Bir are excellent resources specific to our region.

GO ONLINE

Carla Burgess can be reached at ncgardenshare@mindspring.com.

For more gardening advice, go to the "Carolina Gardens" section of www.carolinacountry.com.

Hemlock pests

The hemlock woolly adelgid is a destructive non-native insect that is steadily ravaging wild stands of hemlocks, with Eastern hemlock *(Tsuga canadensis)* and Carolina hemlock *(T. caroliniana)* being the most susceptible. Like aphids, the adelgid sucks fluids from a tree, killing it within three to five years. Foresters predict an epidemic in proportion to the chestnut blight, which completely destroyed the American chestnut, and are experimenting with biological control using introduced predatory beetles. Ornamental hemlocks are vulnerable as well, and experts urge homeowners to inspect their trees carefully for this pest. A sure sign of infestation is cotton-like tufts (the insects' eggsacs) at the base of the needles. Horticultural oils or insecticidal soap are possible control options, but application must be carefully timed. Early detection is critical, and homeowners are encouraged to contact their Cooperative Extension agent immediately. Learn about treatment options at www.ces.ncsu.edu/depts/ent/notes/O&T/trees/note119/note119.html and www.saveourhemlocks.org.

Recycling Christmas trees

Put discarded Christmas trees to good use. The town of Hendersonville shreds trees and gives free mulch to residents (See www.eco-wnc.org/xmas_tree_recycling.htm). To learn about tree recycling near you, visit http://northcarolina.earth911.org, or call your local solid waste office.

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By James Dulley

Controlling indoor humidity

To understand how to control indoor humidity year-round, it is important to understand the term "relative humidity" or RH. Warmer air can hold more water vapor (moisture) than colder air. If the air at 75 degrees has a RH of 50 percent, it means the air is holding 50 percent of the maximum amount of water vapor it can hold at that temperature.

If that same air drops to 50 degrees, that same amount of water vapor may now be 70 percent RH of the maximum amount the cooler air can hold. When the air gets cool enough, next to window glass during the winter or the refrigerator door seal during the summer, it reaches a point when it can no longer hold that much water vapor. This is called the dew point. This is when the windows or the refrigerator door sweat or it starts to rain outdoors.

You can purchase an inexpensive hygrometer at most hardware and home center stores to measure indoor relative humidity. If you are having humidity-related problems, your best gauge of the proper relative humidity is when the problems are alleviated or, at least, tolerable.

For example, if you have old single-pane windows on the north side of your home, you would have to get the relative humidity level to an uncomfortably low level to avoid window condensation on cold winter nights. On the south side, it may not be possible to stop all mold and mildew in the bathroom even if you run the vent fan and your central air conditioner almost continuously.

Indoor humidity levels can be controlled by just opening windows or running the furnace or air conditioner more, but these options increase your monthly utility bills and waste energy.

There is not just one ideal indoor humidity level. For personal comfort, a target of 40 to 45 percent relative humidity is good. Most people are comfortable with a relative humidity ranging from 30 to 50 percent and can tolerate 20 to 60 percent. When the relative humidity is in the proper range, you can set your furnace or central air conditioner thermostat down or up respectively and save energy.

When the relative humidity level gets too high, there can be serious health problems related to allergies, dust mites, mold and mildew growth, and other harmful microbes. At the other extreme with the relative humidity too low, a person's mucus membranes may dry out, increasing your susceptibility to colds and respiratory illnesses. Also, some nasty microbes prefer excessively dry air.

The keys to maintaining a comfortable and efficient indoor humidity level are to control the sources of moisture and to ventilate them efficiently. The average person gives off one-quarter cup of moisture per hour just from breathing. If you exercise at home, it can be much higher. Cooking for a family of four produces five cups of moisture per day. A shower contributes one-half pint and a bath contributes one-eighth pint.

James Dulley

Condensation on windows throughout your home during the winter is a good indication of excess indoor humidity.

Exterior sources are leaky roofs, plumbing, windows, doors, etc. Once you have taken care of these problem areas, check the slope of the ground around your home. It should slope downward slightly away from your house walls. Even with the best new windows, soggy soil around your home allows excess moisture to migrate indoors year-round.

Installing efficient replacement windows or exterior storm windows is the best method to control a window condensation problem efficiently. This also saves energy during the summer cooling season. With more efficient glass, you should be able to close insulating window shades at night to save energy. With old windows, closing shades exacerbates condensation problems.

Install new bathroom vent fans with humidity sensors. These come on automatically and run until the humidity level drops. With a manual switch, you have to either turn it off prematurely when you leave for work or let it run all day. Check the seal around the clothes dryer duct leading to the outdoor vent.

Install a new furnace/heat pump with a variable-speed blower and compatible thermostat to allow it to run in an efficient dehumidification mode during the summer. Make sure the damper handle on the central humidifier is set for the proper season. Use electric countertop cookers and vegetable steamers in the garage instead of in the kitchen during the summer. I use an outdoor solar-powered steamer on sunny days.

Send inquiries to James Dulley, Carolina Country, 6906 Royalgreen Dr., Cincinnati, OH 45244 or visit www.dulley.com

James Dulley is an engineer and syndicated columnist for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association

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Creamy White Chili

- 1 pound boneless skinless chicken breasts, cut into ½-inch cubes
- 1 medium onion, chopped
- 1½ teaspoons garlic powder
- 1 tablespoon vegetable oil
- 2 cans (15½ ounces each) great northern beans, rinsed and drained
- 1 can (14½ ounces each) chicken broth
- 2 cans (4 ounces each) chopped green chilies
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon ground cumin
- 1 teaspoon dried oregano
- ½ teaspoon pepper
- ¼ teaspoon cayenne pepper
- 1 cup (8 ounces) sour cream
- ½ cup heavy whipping cream

In a large saucepan over medium heat, sauté chicken, onion and garlic powder in oil until chicken is no longer pink. Add beans, broth, chilies and seasonings. Bring to a boil. Reduce heat; simmer, uncovered, for 30 minutes. Remove from the heat; stir in sour cream and cream. Serve immediately.

Yield: 7 servings

Baked Bean Chili

- 2 pounds ground beef
- 3 cans (28 ounces each) baked beans
- 1 can (46 ounces) tomato juice
- 1 can (11½ ounces) V8 juice
- 1 envelope chili seasoning

In a Dutch oven, cook beef over medium heat until no longer pink; drain. Stir in other ingredients. Bring to a boil. Reduce heat; simmer, uncovered, for 10 minutes.

Yield: 24 servings

Too Easy Tortellini Soup

- 4 cups chicken broth
- 1 package (9 ounces) refrigerated cheese tortellini
- 1 can (15 ounces) white kidney or cannelloni beans, rinsed and drained
- 1 can (14½ ounces) Italian diced tomatoes, undrained
- 1½ teaspoons dried basil
- 1 tablespoon red wine vinegar
- Shredded Parmesan cheese and coarsely ground pepper, optional

In a large saucepan, bring broth to a boil. Stir in tortellini. Reduce heat; simmer, uncovered, for 4 minutes, stirring occasionally. Stir in the beans, tomatoes and basil. Simmer for 4–6 minutes or until pasta is tender. Stir in the vinegar. Sprinkle with Parmesan cheese and pepper if desired.

Yield: 6 servings

Recipes are by Taste of Home magazine. For a sample copy, send $2 to Taste of Home, Suite 4321, PO Box 990, Greendale WI 53129-0990. Visit the Web page at www.tasteofhome.com

GO ONLINE Find more than 300 recipes and photos, and share your favorite recipes, at our Web site: www.carolinacountry.com

Winning reader recipe

Chocolate Chip Delight

- 2 packages chocolate chip cookies (your choice of brand of cookies)
- 1 large tub of Cool Whip (I use the 16 ounce tub)
- Enough milk to moisten cookies

Pour some milk in a bowl. Dip one cookie at a time until moist (do not hold cookie in milk until it is soggy and crumbles). Place your moistened cookies in a single layer in a 13-by-9-inch pan. Top this layer of cookies with a layer of Cool Whip. Continue layering, ending up with the remaining Cool Whip on top. If there are any cookies left take them and crumble them up to use as garnish on top. Place in the refrigerator until it has set and has gotten cold, usually overnight.

Caron Harper, a member of Tri-County EMC, will receive $25 for submitting this recipe.

Send Us Your Recipes

Contributors whose recipes are published will receive $25. We retain reprint rights for all submissions. Include your name, address, phone number (if we have questions), and the name of your electric cooperative. Mail to: Carolina Country Kitchen, P.O. Box 27306, Raleigh, NC 27611 or E-mail to: Jenny.Lloyd@carolinacountry.com

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55	$ 3.20	$ 2.53
65	$ 5.36	$ 4.14
75	$10.23	$ 7.64
85	$19.77	$16.52

* Does not include $36 policy fee, minimums may apply

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